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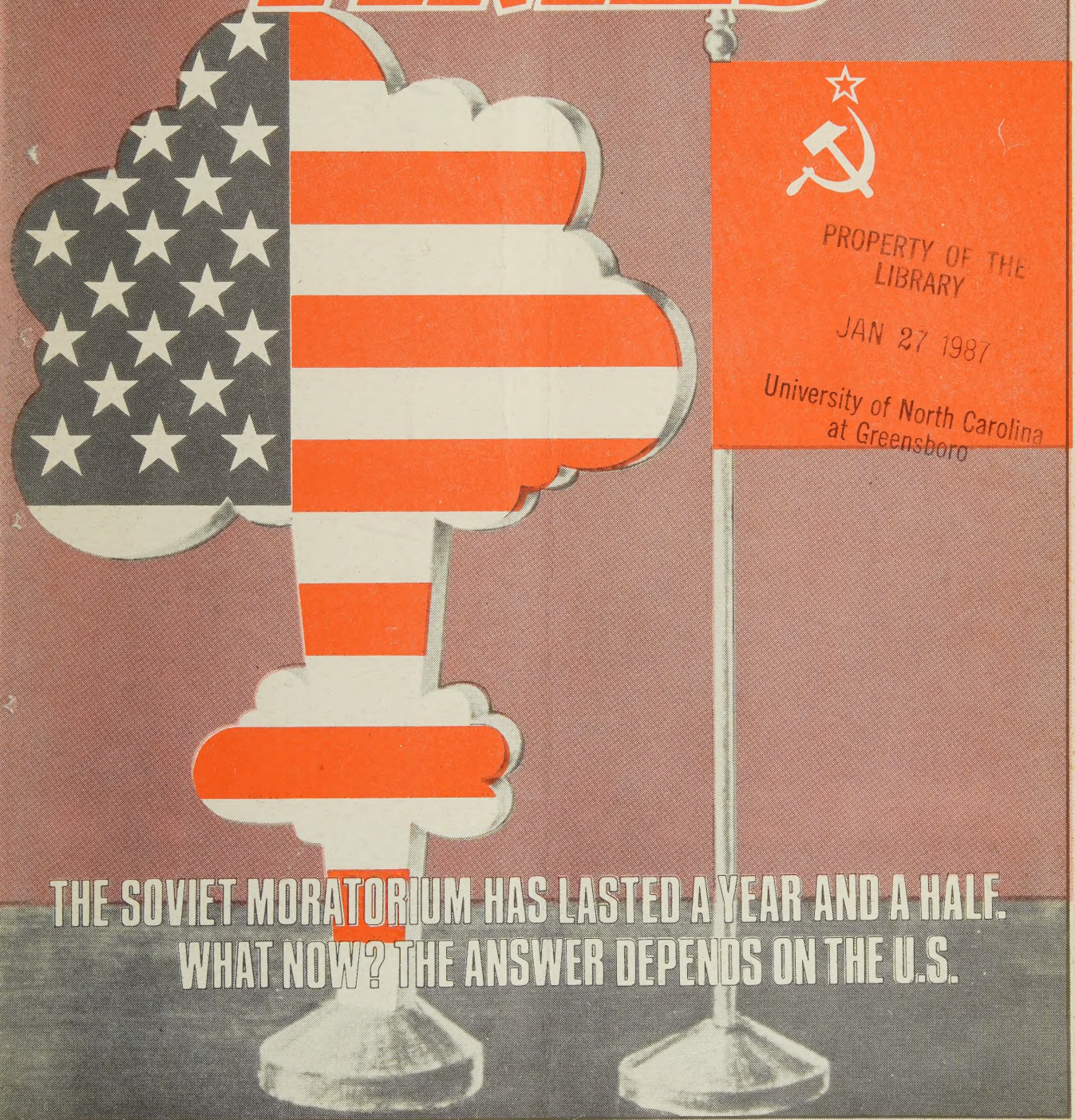
NEW TIMES



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THE SOVIET MORATORIUM HAS LASTED A YEAR AND A HALF. WHAT NOW? THE ANSWER DEPENDS ON THE U.S.

1917–1987

At the time of the storming of the Winter Palace there was only a one or two days' reserve of bread left in Petrograd. Several years of war plus the political helplessness of the former Provisional Government had brought the country to the point of economic disaster during the preceding summer. Now Russia was faced with a hungry winter. The bread ration had to be cut. The revolution, which had inscribed "bread, peace and freedom" on its banners, had to contend with battlefronts and famine, devastation and war.

As Soviet power gained ground, asserting itself in Moscow, the Urals and in the Volga area, with counterrevolutionary uprisings erupting on its heels and newlybaked "Russian dictators" springing up, drenching the Ukraine, the Kuban and the Pskov Region in blood, the Bolsheviks, who had assumed full responsibility for the future of the peoples of Russia, charted the road to the political and economic reconstruction of the country.

The scope and pace of the dramatic events and the sweeping changes brought by the October Revolution as a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat are truly breathtaking. Very soon that dictatorship would be depicted as the antipode of democracy by those who were unwilling or afraid to admit that the Bolsheviks saw the dictatorship of the proletariat as the antithesis not of democracy but of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, and that the Soviets could win in this historical contest.

On the initiative of Lenin, the newborn republic issued a call to the peoples and governments of the Entente countries and the United States to join in peace negotiations. The war had to be ended. On December 17, 1917, the whole of hungry Petrograd came out into the streets. A massive demonstration in defence of peace and the foreign policy of the Soviet government marched through the revolutionary city.

Thus, for the first time in history, a state speaking for the whole people, addressed an appeal for universal peace to all mankind. Five days later came the "response": the Paris conference of the Entente powers had secretly decided to divide Soviet Russia into spheres of influence—Britain was to get the Caucasus, France, the Crimea, the United States and Japan, Siberia. The Ukraine, Byelorussia, the Baltic were to be severed from Soviet Russia by Germany.

It was in these circumstances that on January 15 (January 28 new style) the revolutionary government announced that a regular army capable of defending freedom and the revolution was being set up.

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OF WORLD AFFAIRS

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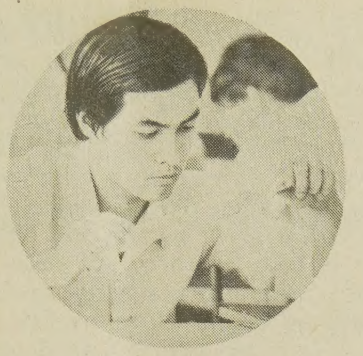

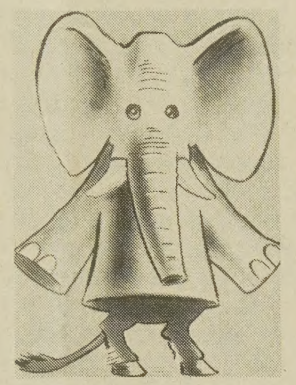

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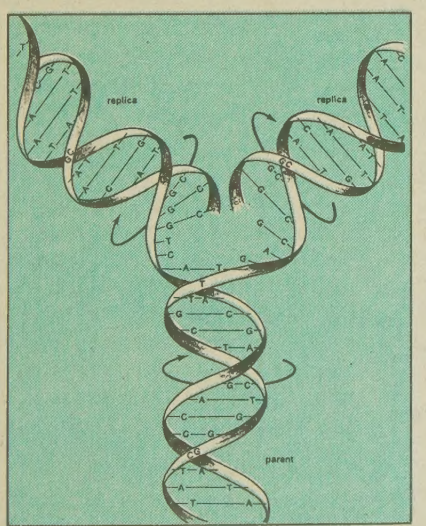

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HUMAN GENETICS OR INHUMAN GENETICS!
Each of us has a unique set of genes. But this very necessary diversity has another side to it too.... Interview with Professor YURI RYCHKOV

NEW TIMES

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FROM OUR MAILBAG

With his weakness for flowery and sentimental turns of phrase, President Reagan once likened the United States to a shining city on a hilltop. However, irrefutable evidence and the harsh light of day, specially when shed on "Irangate," had one to revise that glittering simile. Washington can be far more aptly compared with a derelict coaching inn where the entire U.S. Administration, Reagan's entire team are wallowing up to their ears in the mud.

A. KONYAEV
Kiev, U.S.S.R.

In Italy, where I live, it is to be regretted that many still greet news of misfortunes occurring in the U.S.S.R. and the other socialist countries with wicked glee. Accusing the Russians of every deadly sin, they blind themselves to what is happening in Italy itself. American nuclear aircraft carriers with death dealing weapons on board cruise in the Mediterranean. One stupid chance is enough to blow up the whole sea. Atomic weapons are also deployed on Italian soil. It is high time we realized at last that the Soviet Union seeks peace not only for itself, but for all who live on our earth.

Antonio FORGIONE
Lucera, Italy

It is a pity that to this day there are millions throughout the world who still fall for the slander and falsehood being propagated about the socialist system and your country. I have just had the good fortune to see in the new year in the Soviet Union. As I looked at festive Moscow and the beaming faces round me, I was still more convinced that only socialism can bring peace and progress to the destitute and disinherited the world over.

Ba DIAKITE
Nioro, Mali

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

LIFE MUST TRIUMPH!

It is not merely a macabre thought but the gruesome reality that, with the overkill capacity of the world's nuclear arsenals, every man, woman and child on the planet is constantly stalked by death squared, cubed, magnified to the nth degree. We are now faced with the prospect of megadeath, which defies description in accustomed terms. That prospect must be warded off, and to do so it is imperative to face the facts squarely and to act accordingly.

So far the most terrible calamity experienced by mankind was World War II. Today a single Ohio-class submarine packs firepower equal to that which sowed death and destruction throughout those six most fearful years in human history. A simple equation illustrative of the new reality: one submarine equals the second world war.

In the depositories of modern civilization lie 50,000 nuclear warheads—one million Hiroshimas. The new age has brought new units of measurement. Hiroshima is now not only the name of a city, it is a measure of death.

All the religions in the world are powerless to persuade man that there is a real danger of the world coming to an end. This indomitable love of life is admirable. But today there can be no delay in bringing home to all the new—and fundamental—fact that the million Hiroshima stockpiles hold out a very real prospect of the end of the world at any moment.

Nature has endowed man with a built-in sense of dangers of various kinds, but radiation is not one of them. The nuclear age is man-made and man himself has to create mechanism of protection against the threat it contains. Nature has developed in man the instinct of self-preservation, the instinct of the continuation of the species. Society, awakened to the dangers of the nuclear age, must develop in the whole of humanity an instinct of self-preservation, of the continuation of the human race.

Truly rational, civilized behaviour must become the natural and spontaneous norm for individuals, political organizations and states. Some actions must be ruled out.

The very idea of war as a means of attaining political objectives must be declared criminal and abandoned for all time. Use of force must be banished from the sphere of intercourse between states. Mass annihilation weapons must be destroyed before they destroy human life, if only by mistake.

In security policy one simple rule must prevail: do unto others as you would be done by. The days of security at the expense and to the detriment of others are gone.

The survival of mankind must become the top priority in the scale of social values. And all that runs counter to this—national, class or group egoism, ideological fanaticism, private interests and ambitions—must be subject to the closest scrutiny.

The present-day world expends far too much energy and resources on preparing for a war that must be not allowed to happen, on an exhausting confrontation, on sowing animosity and fear.

The golden age in human history will begin only after all that is ended.

The programme of nuclear disarmament by the end of the century, advanced by Mikhail Gorbachev exactly a year ago, on January 15, 1986, could usher in this age.

The idea of a non-nuclear, non-violent world, boldly proclaimed by the leaders of the U.S.S.R. and India, is the key to that future.

Life must triumph!

IS A NUCLEAR-FREE WORLD POSSIBLE?

AND WHAT IN YOUR OPINION ARE THE PREREQUISITES FOR INTERNATIONAL STABILITY?

Dmitry Likhachev:

NOT ONLY A POSSIBILITY BUT A MUST

Dmitry Likhachev is a member of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences and president of the Soviet Culture Fund.

A nuclear-free world is not only a **possibility,** but a **must.** For nuclear weapons represent a monstrous threat. A lot has been written about this by my colleagues—physicists, military experts and journalists. What I am concerned with here is the impact of the "nuclear factor" on the ethos of people and the human race as a whole.

The nuclear weapon is a weapon of wholesale denial. It denies culture too. Respect for culture diminishes under its sinister shadow. I have had this argument put to me by people in whose power it is to preserve this or that cultural monument: why try if it will be destroyed anyway?

There are other consequences as well. People are beginning to wonder whether they should have children if they are to have no future.

Not only culture, but life itself cannot exist with nuclear weapons, even if they are not used. Why is this so? This weapon is being constantly improved and made more compact and lightweight. So there is a growing danger of individual terrorists getting hold of it. And if that happens, who knows what price we shall have to pay? Raphael's Madonna? Billions in ransom? Parts of our country's territories? Who can tell what will enter the heads of terrorists?

There is a further reason that makes it necessary to halt all nuclear tests and all research to modernize these weapons. We cannot be assured that new discoveries in this field will not fall into the hands of small-minded, vain people who would want to use scientific achievements to the detriment of humanity.

This poses a serious moral problem for scientists. I believe a special moral code for scientists should be worked out. It is necessary to elaborate the common moral principles that guided scientists in the last century. And this applies not only to physicists. Moral problems arise in the field of genetic engineering. Students of the humanities too face these problems.

How to translate all this into real experience? I see international conferences to thrash out a moral code for scientists in various fields. That is why my idea of a stable world is a world of communities, regular international conferences on the problems that arise. It is a world with frontiers only for criminals.

Communication among people in different countries is the main obstacle to wars. People must see and realize that people living elsewhere are like themselves. Not all of us, perhaps, can appreciate the beauty of a Negroid face. However, after a stay in Sicily, where I mixed with Africans, I became aware of remarkable African beauty.

We must be quite frank in talking about the things that obstruct stability in our world. One of the most hideous enemies is nationalism. From my observation, I regret to say that it is on the upsurge. I have had several occasions to say that nationalism is the opposite of patriotism. If patriotism is love of one's own people, nationalism is hatred of other peoples. Meanwhile, what the world needs is every kind of communication between people, exchanges between peoples and cultures.

One of the noblest missions of the humanities is to preserve the cultures of the small vanishing ethnic groups. After all, they are part of our cultural genetic stock. To preserve it is the moral duty of the large nations especially.

As for the great Russian people, its task is not only to preserve its own cultural values. It is equally important to preserve the cultural values of the numerous small peoples inhabiting our country, for example, the Ugro-Finnish peoples in the North. Some of them number only 2,000-3,000 people. We in this country cannot set up reservations as they do for Indians in America. But the situation is complex: today almost every representative of the small peoples wants to get a higher education. Such an education is impossible to acquire in the language of the people to which that person belongs. Hence, he must be bilingual. But he should not forget his folklore, theatre, ethnic characteristics, and so on. A tricky task? But it is a challenge worth the effort. Incidentally, bilingualism has always been important in Russian culture. Pushkin was bilingual, which earned him the nickname "Pushkin the Frenchman" in his youth. But this did not affect his Russian. Many great Russian writers had a fine command of foreign languages.

What does all this prove? A modern person must know many languages. This will help in communication with other peoples, and thus contribute to stability in the world.

I am convinced that the 21st century must be a century of the humanities. Otherwise mankind risks turning into a race of humanoids adept only at counting and using computers, while all

the spiritual values would be reduced to a single word, "Cool", as was the case with the characters in a new film by Georgi Danelia. We must speak well in order to think well. We must have a fine command of our own language to understand other languages.

How do I see the science of the future? It is a science concentrated in international institutes with scientists from different countries, a science of rapid communication.

I see the art of the future as an art incorporating the classical heritage. This is the only way if it is to have a profound impact on man.

I would like to see school curricula include logic, the art of debate and classical languages, whose value has been forgotten.

I dream of a time when people's command of foreign languages will equip them not just to be waiters, but to read classics.

The sooner the world gets rid of nuclear weapons, the sooner this will happen. ■

Amintore Fanfani:
TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT PATH

Amintore Fanfani is President of the Italian Senate.

The dialogue on how to prevent a third world war began in Yalta before the second world war was over. It has waxed and waned ever since. Specific differences were discussed covering a wide range of issues. The number of participants in the dialogue has varied. It has been pursued in different political arenas. There have been narrow summit meetings and crowded gatherings including the U.N. General Assembly. Unfortunately, despite the abundance of negotiations, it has been impossible to rule out clashes and conflicts and even wars. But luckily, up to now at least, these meetings have helped to avoid conflict on a global scale.

The Italian people has taken part in these recurrent dialogues through its representatives, directly or indirectly. Since 1946 I have been a member of parliament, a Minister, Prime Minister, President of the Senate and president of the 20th U.N. General Assembly. I have thus had every opportunity to put forward hypotheses, support proposals, challenge decisions, and comment on the results on behalf of the political forces and parliamentary and government bodies in Italy.

I hope that during my time in these posts, I duly fulfilled certain mandates, while adhering to my conviction of the need to preserve peace and accordingly to broaden agreements that would prevent friction or conflict and contribute towards broader international cooperation.

Going back to my statements on various occasions, recently published in a book entitled "Reflections on the Dialogue for Peace," I can say that in these troubled times they may help to choose the right path to arrive at new and exceedingly important decisions. The unstable peace we have enjoyed for 40 years can develop into the coveted stable peace. Such peace can only emerge if all of us finally understand that a continued arms race would lead not to further precarious coexistence, but, alas, to the disappearance of life on our planet.

I believe the two distinguished participants in the Reykjavik dialogue were right not to have drawn negative conclusions from the meeting. The hope now is that, regarding is as a necessary stage, they will be able to build on what has been achieved to take further essential and important steps, notably in the matter of nuclear disarmament and conclude agreements on peaceful coexistence, which means the balanced development of all people and the spread of universal well-being. ■

IS A NUCLEAR-FREE WORLD POSSIBLE?

Jürgen Schneider:
BALLAST IN NATURE'S FRAGILE SCALES

Dr Jürgen Schneider is a professor at the Göttingen University Institute of Geology and Lithosphere Dynamics (F.R.G.).

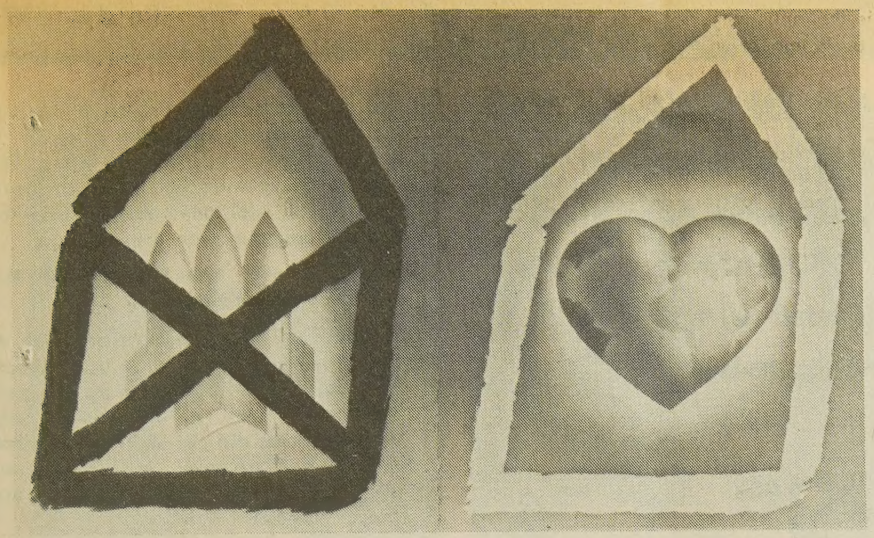
A nuclear-free planet is not a fantasy on the part of day-dreamers in the peace movement, but a realistic and increasingly urgent political imperative. A world without nuclear weapons is not only possible, but feasible, given the political will.

War is not something "natural" like, for instance, the aggressive instinct in predatory animals. Man is the only living being that consciously kills in war, plans and wages war against his own kind. The combination of intellect and aggressiveness in man has found expression in the invention, development and use of ever more horrible types of weapon, and eventually of the nuclear weapon. At the same time, the invention and creation of the nuclear weapon has made it possible to destroy the whole human race. This has given rise to the doctrine of "nuclear deterrence," which supposedly helps to preserve peace.

Untold intellectual and material resources have been put at the service of the policy of "deterrence." The priorities engendered by the cold war have produced a military-political strategy in which the buildup of arms and continuing preparations for war are regarded and extolled as safeguards of peace.

By contrast, efforts and contributions towards the study of ways of preserving peace and eliminating conflicts have been lamentably inadequate and ineffective. To this day there is no effective mechanism to resolve conflict situations without the threat of using force. Studies of the questions of preserving peace and eliminating conflicts are not encouraged. There is clearly still not enough awareness of the need for such studies.

We hear of the benefits to peace supposedly resulting from the buildup of armaments, and not of the benefits



"Their home, our home." A poster entered for the international competition "For Peace and Social Progress" which has opened in Moscow.

of disarmament. However, it is high time the arms race was curtailed as inadmissible in economic, social and ecological, let alone moral terms. Even the economies of the "rich" countries are no longer able to sustain the burden of the arms race.

Today contradictions between ideologies and socio-political systems are no longer to the fore. The future of the present and coming generations, the very foundations of their existence hang in the balance. The question is whether there will be a future at all. The fact that we are witnessing a global attack on nature and the foundations of the life of future generations can no longer be challenged. We are close to "winning" the war against nature unless we revise our priorities. The rapidly increasing exploitation of the earth will eventually lead to mortal clashes over sources of drinking water, arable land and raw materials, unless we commit all our spiritual and material potential to averting this global danger.

The public and political leaders East and West must become conscious of this and draw the necessary conclusions. The first of these should be the recognition of the need for serious and substantial disarmament. Arms buildup and progress are diametrically opposed. This does not apply to developing countries only. If the arms race continues, the resources for resolving global problems will vanish.

Peace through disarmament and reconciliation with nature are equal and fundamental prerequisites for our future. The first step in this direction is to get rid of hostile stereotypes in domestic and foreign policies. It is necessary to do more to explain the dangers of the present situation to the public and politicians. All countries should set up commissions of independent experts in various fields to build models of the future, analyze them and develop corresponding programmes for coordinated political action. In doing so the goals must be identified and the means determined to find a way out of the present situation.

International stability and security cannot be achieved and maintained through the arms race and confrontation in the exchange of technology (these processes unfortunately are still closely interrelated). Preserving peace by military means is an anachronism which must be resolutely opposed. Study of the problems of preserving peace and the natural environment is the biggest challenge facing human society. Decisive steps towards disarmament are needed in order to strengthen confidence. They include: an end to arms exports, phased reductions of existing arms arsenals and, if necessary, unilateral disarmament. This would provide a signal to the world public. This kind of trust calls for courage and confidence in one's actions.

We must approach the problems facing the world in a different way from before. We must practise new forms of coexistence, including non-traditional forms. It is necessary to renounce hegemonistic ambitions, which have always been an obstacle to mutual understanding. We must get rid of the harmful habit of thinking in the narrow categories of one's own bloc. Everything that tends to diminish mistrust and promote confidence is useful. To this end, politicians as well as scientists and the ordinary people East and West, North and South must meet each other more often and on a far broader basis in order to get to know each other and together gain greater insight into their common and sometimes different problems. This is the only way to create an atmosphere of mutual confidence and understanding as a precondition for resolving the problems facing the whole of mankind. Only trust and mutual understanding can provide the basis for a stable world. ■

Hideaki Nagai:

THE MEASURE OF GOODNESS IN EVERY HUMAN HEART

Hideaki Nagai is deputy director of the International Peace Institute in Hiroshima.

My answer to the question of whether a world without nuclear weapons is possible is a categorical Yes! If it were otherwise, the struggle of millions of people in various countries to avert the nuclear threat would be rendered meaningless, like the sitdown strikes in front of the monument to the victims of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima after each nuclear test.

It is more difficult for me to answer the question about security safeguards in a nuclear-free world, because I am neither a military expert nor a politician. But I believe that the measure of goodness each individual carries in his heart can help all of mankind to find an answer to this complex question. In the meantime the urgent problem facing us is how to ensure that the nuclear powers refrain from testing in the current year. The victims of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima are going to start collecting signatures to an appeal to Moscow and Washington. The city council of Hiroshima is sending messages to the leaders of the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France. The message to the Soviet leader speaks highly of the moratorium on all nuclear tests which has been in force since August 6, 1985, and invites him to visit Hiroshima. The messages to Washington, London and Paris contain a demand to turn the unilateral Soviet moratorium into a universal one. We hope very much that peace will be given a chance, and that the leaders of the great powers will heed the appeal of the ordinary people. Let there be no more Hiroshimas! ■

Poll conducted by B. BALKAREI, Y. TAVROVSKY, A. TOLPEGIN

On the eve of the next round of the Soviet-U.S. talks on nuclear and space arms limitation, the Soviet representative on the strategic offensive arms group, Ambassador at Large ALEXEI OBUKHOV, has given this interview to our staff writers Galina Sidorova and Dmitry Pogorzhelsky

Our Package at Geneva

N.T. Soviet-American talks on further limitations of strategic offensive arms—beyond SALT-1 and SALT-2—have been conducted, off and on, since 1981. To a lay observer, the talks have seemed until now to focus on "technical" matters, with endless figures, ceilings and subceilings being tabled and experts racking their brains over equivalences. The Soviet proposals being tabled today are more global and accessible but, at the same time, more complex in their simplicity. Can it be said that the negotiations are proceeding at a new level?

Obukhov. You are right. We have behind us a prolonged period of discussions. We have a solid record of agreements concluded during the SALT-1 and SALT-2 negotiations. Many problems were studied then. Although the American side is trying to discard existing agreements, the experience accumulated during that period is with us and will remain useful.

The Soviet initiatives, notably the programme to eliminate nuclear weapons before the end of the century put forward on January 15, 1986, have now created the necessary conditions for adopting truly comprehensive decisions in the areas we are discussing.

Formerly, the issue was one of limiting strategic armaments and there was no talk of drastic cuts, although certain cuts were envisaged by the SALT-2 treaty, if it had been ratified. Now the Soviet Union is proposing to get rid of the burden of nuclear weapons before the end of the century. Mikhail Gorbachev's position set out in Reykjavik was a development of the January proposal. We have arrived at joint solutions in a number of areas. They have not, however, been formalized because the U.S. is clinging to SDI. But the fact remains that in the field of strategic offensive armaments, the prospect of eliminating these arms within ten years was discussed. Equally drastic measures were contemplated in the field of Soviet and U.S. medium-range missiles deployed in Europe—they would be subject to elimination.

The challenge in Geneva today is to draw up agreements on the basis of the Reykjavik accords, agreements that could mark a turning point in international development and pave the way towards a nuclear-free world. Ultimately, of course, these agreements would have to be enshrined in legal documents to be prepared by the delegations at the negotiations. This is very painstaking work, but early success is possible given the political will and desire to come to terms.

Who Is Creating New Problems

N.T. It is almost three months since the Reykjavik meeting. Has there been any noticeable change in the American position? In its tone? Has it come up with any new proposals?

Obukhov. We should bear in mind that certain quarters were alarmed by Reykjavik. They would like to see all its positive outcome buried, to forget this episode as if it had never taken place. This, unfortunately, has been made clear by the behaviour of official representatives of the U.S. and some other Western countries.

The same concepts, so to speak, can be clearly discerned in the position of the American side at the talks. Our partners have tried to dodge Reykjavik and create additional obstacles on the already arduous path to success.

N.T. How, specifically, did this tendency manifest itself?

Obukhov. Take the central issue of preventing the arms race in outer space. In Reykjavik, SDI proved to be the main stumbling block. At the Geneva talks the Americans did not exert the slightest effort to find a solution to the problem and this despite the fact that our proposals remain in force.

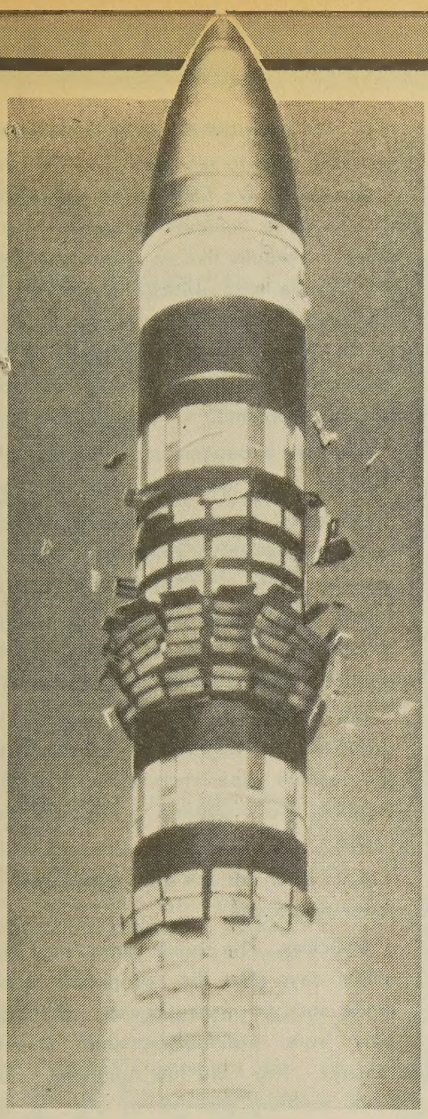
The Soviet side does not demand that Washington abandon all work on SDI. We allow for corresponding research and tests so long as they are confined to the laboratory. Such activity would not be considered a violation of the ABM treaty. But in order to strengthen the regime of that treaty, we propose a ban on all space tests of ABM space elements. The need for such a mutual commitment is evident. Otherwise the allowable period of non-withdrawal from the ABM treaty as advocated by the Soviet Union would see not compliance with the provisions of this document of unlimited duration, but its dilution and erosion.

After that, in accordance with our plan, the sides would hold talks in order to assess the situation and decide what to do next. The American representatives, however, would not discuss any limitations on SDI.

Interpreting to Violate

N.T. In the U.S., there is talk of two interpretations of the ABM treaty, the "narrow" and the "broad." What exactly is meant?

Obukhov. Judging from official U.S. statements, Washington is currently adhering to the so-called "broad" interpretation of the ABM treaty. I think the use of this term is imprecise because there can be only one interpretation of the treaty, namely, the correct one. The essence of the treaty is clearly expressed in its text. Article 1, for instance, reads that the parties have no right to create an ABM system in their country's territory or conduct preparations for creating it. All the other provisions are geared to Article 1, ensuring compliance with it. Article 5 forbids the creation, testing and deployment of a space-based ABM system or components thereof. The "broad" interpretation actually means an arbitrary interpretation whereby the treaty does not



"I WANT TO GROW UP, NOT BLOW UP!" British children appeal to the adults on whom their future depends. But the adults shaping Western policy across the Atlantic offer the children fear and the arms race. The U.S. Strategic Air Command has officially adopted the first ten intercontinental MX ballistic missiles, stationed at Warren air force base in Wyoming.

From Morning Star (Britain) and Stern (F.R.G.)

impose any limitations on ABM systems based on alternative physical principles. An attempt is being made to convince us that the treaty allows the corresponding tests anywhere, including outer space.

The U.S. is trying to justify its commitment to SDI and to conducting work that would essentially wreck the ABM treaty.

Meanwhile, according to the treaty—which sets strict limits on the scope and areas of ABM deployment—the so-called "exotic" types of ABM systems can only exist in a land-based stationary shape. Hence, such systems cannot be tested in outer space, in the air and at sea or on a mobile ground basis.

N.T. After the Gorbachev-Reagan meeting, the Western press revived its old thesis that the U.S.S.R. is taking an "all-or-nothing" stand. Official representatives have also said this, citing our package of proposals. Could you comment on these statements?

Obukhov. The United States and other Western countries should consider and give its due to our package. For it promises a solution to incredibly complex issues and makes it possible to cut the Gordian knot of the Number One problem—restraining the arms race.

The U.S.S.R. has offered very considerable concessions. Take, for instance, strategic offensive weapons, an area close to me. We have withdrawn our demand to count in U.S. medium-range missiles that can reach our territory.

On medium-range missiles, the U.S.S.R. would exclude the British and French nuclear potentials, provided the Soviet Union and the U.S. liquidate their medium-range missiles in Europe. And yet these potentials are not negligible.

The package balances compromises and the interests of both parties. Let me stress that our package is not a precondition. It is a weighed and thoroughly considered set of measures paving the way to a nuclear-free world.

Those who ascribe to us an "all-or-nothing" position want to prevent progress at the Geneva talks. They want to tear the package apart, retaining those aspects that suit the West, while forgetting that we too have our own security interests. We will not agree to that.

Needed: Compromises, Not Manoeuvres

N.T. The package contains the Soviet "zero option" concerning medium-range missiles. The U.S. stand on SDI blocked an agreement in this area when it seemed within reach. And yet it has recently been suggested in Western Europe that this is the area where progress is most realistic. Is this a justified viewpoint?

Obukhov. The Soviet Union has exhibited unprecedented flexibility in this matter. I have said that the French and British potentials are not negligible and continue to grow. It is no secret against whom they would be used. Paris and London are Washington's allies in NATO and are closely cooperating in the alliance, as is well known.

And yet, in order to achieve progress on the whole range of issues, the U.S.S.R. has agreed not only to exclude the Anglo-French potential, but even not to raise the question of its growth. This is proof of our readiness to negotiate and look for a mutually acceptable solution.

Incidentally, the American side has offered its own "package" on medium-range missiles. It seems to have lost interest in the problem of medium-range missiles and is trying to get shorter-range missiles into the focus of attention.

I must stress that inasmuch as we are talking about very far-reaching and real disarmament measures, they should be carried out together. Our approach cannot lead to an impasse. On the contrary, it paves the way for an agreement. In the negotiations, we proceed in such a way as not to block the path to

success on any of the issues on the agenda. We are prepared to advance in all directions.

N.T. We are well aware of the ambivalence felt in the U.S. in the wake of Reykjavik: what did the President agree to? How far did he go in accepting Soviet proposals? Did this affect the behaviour of your partners on the other side of the table?

Obukhov. It is on paper that Reagan had agreed to the complete elimination of strategic offensive weapons within the specified period of ten years. After the summit, our partners suddenly began to talk along different lines. We are being told that by the end of the said period the U.S. would only be ready to eliminate ballistic missiles. This is a far cry from what has been agreed in Reykjavik.

N.T. But the New York Times has reported the Reagan Administration as stating that the U.S. intends to abandon its proposal to eliminate all ballistic missiles within ten years, and is not insisting on it. What is behind this? Is it a sign of flexibility?

Obukhov. So far, the U.S. stand in Geneva is the one I have just described. Let us look at what we are being offered. If we remember the figures agreed under SALT-2, the U.S. has a little under 600 strategic bombers. The U.S.S.R. has about 150. Let us imagine that as a first stage, i.e., before 1991, they are reduced by half. Then, if IBMs alone are eliminated, the U.S. will gain a considerable edge. This is no basis for agreement. You are right in saying that Washington is now talking of modifying its position, departing from a hard line, of its readiness to preserve a certain number of IBMs. But this is not flexibility. It is a departure from Reykjavik, where what was under consideration was the elimination, by the end of 1996, of all offensive strategic systems constituting the triad.

N.T. Furthermore, as you have mentioned, the U.S. is violating the SALT-2 agreement. Will that affect negotiations?

Obukhov. It is easier to conclude a new agreement—which is our aim—proceeding from what has been achieved than to start from scratch. The atmosphere at negotiations is very important for the course of the discussion. It can either make the adoption of decisions more difficult or contribute to an agreement. If the arms race makes a spurt in every direction while negotiations are in progress, it is far more difficult to agree. The arms race outstrips, as it were, efforts towards an agreement. This is how we should view the U.S. action in exceeding the SALT-2 limits. That is why we say that their manoeuvres impede negotiations and create further obstacles.

N.T. Let us dwell on the talks on nuclear and space arms limitations. Could you tell us about the procedure and the composition of the groups?

Obukhov. The goals and subject of negotiations were agreed by the Soviet Foreign Minister and the U.S. Secretary of State in January 1985: to prevent the arms race in space and halt it on earth. It was then that the organizational framework was determined: the delegations were divided into three groups according to three areas of negotiations. The first deals with space weapons, the second, with strategic offensive weapons and the third, with medium-range missiles. Representatives of the groups meet regularly in conference. These are the plenary sessions newspapers report in a few lines.

Looking for Points of Contact

N.T. How do the talks proceed in practical terms? Is it a matter of heated arguments and debates, or is it the mere exchange of figures, formulas, ceilings and subceilings?

Obukhov. The forms of procedure took shape gradually as a result of mutual experience. The key elements in the negotiations are the meetings of delegations as a whole, or of groups. The venue is alternately the Soviet and the American missions. The sides exchange statements on this or that issue, or issues they deem it necessary to raise at a given moment. Then the heads of delegations and groups retire for so-called talks after session to have further discussions. Experts have separate meetings.

The debates can be "heated" or calm. We seek businesslike discussions because the aim is to achieve agreement. It is my deep conviction that the main thing is not to start unnecessary arguments and try to outshout each other, but to identify points of contact and work out a common approach that would yield a solution.

Unfortunately, in the post-Reykjavik period our partners have so far failed to take any constructive steps conducive to progress. But progress is only possible if both sides are ready for it.

N.T. On a purely human level, do you feel your partners on the other side of the table want to see success in Geneva?

Obukhov. We have heard assurances of a wish to achieve progress many times. I would like to hope that they are sincere and reflect the attitude of the people whom we have been looking in the eye for nearly two years. The problem is the official position our colleagues represent.

N.T. Has it become more or less difficult to work after Reykjavik?

Obukhov. We have been negotiating for exactly a month since the Reykjavik meeting. The U.S. has tabled its proposals on all three areas of talks. Unfortunately, they are not aimed at progress but at departure from Reykjavik.

The U.S.S.R. for its part tabled its proposals on November 7, summing up the positive experience of the Icelandic meeting and providing a basis for advance.

N.T. How did the Americans react to these proposals?

Obukhov. The round came to an end a few days after the proposals were made and we managed to exchange only very preliminary and isolated remarks. Nor did the American side have anything positive to offer at the working meeting between the heads of groups at the negotiations held in Geneva in early December. Of course, one hopes that by the start of the next round the partners will have arrived at constructive positions, and helped to clear the impasses.

N.T. So, you are an optimist?

Obukhov. Most definitely. Of course, we are dealing with very intricate problems. But let me say that in Reykjavik the flexibility of the Soviet leadership made it possible to reach agreements of a truly revolutionary significance for progress towards a non-nuclear world. This fuels my optimism. Another source of optimism is the demands of millions of people on our planet that are consonant with the Soviet proposal to eliminate the threat of nuclear war for all time. The voice of millions is making itself heard and the anti-war movement will play a growing role and one which is not to be discounted. ■

AFGHANISTAN

For Peace in Every Home

● THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF AFGHANISTAN, THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN HAVE PROPOSED TO CEASE FIRE AND START A PROCESS OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND RESURGENCE.

Throughout the ages man has been concerned with finding shelter, clothing and food. But the undeclared war in Afghanistan has forced on him bullets for food, a grave for a dwelling, and a shroud for clothing.

It was in these terms that Nadjib, General Secretary of the People's Democratic Party, defined the consequences of the war for the Afghans, addressing the Revolutionary Council when it met on January 3 to discuss and endorse a declaration on national reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Reconciliation is a complex process, demanding patience, restraint, and mutual concessions. The aim is to effect reconciliation with all armed formations inside the country that are now fighting the government. In making this very serious and responsible move, the People's Democratic Party and the revolutionary authorities are displaying concern for the interests of all Afghans, of the present and future generations. Already 417 armed groups with a total strength of 37,000 are negotiating with people's government bodies. The talks last for hours, if not days, and are not always successful.

The revolutionary authorities have also agreed to reconciliation with adversaries currently serving prison terms. They are to be released very shortly. The Revolutionary Council's declaration urges reconciliation with and a return of all Afghans living abroad. They are being offered the opportunity to join in the building of a new life at home. The government has set up a special office to receive them and help them settle down. The process of national reconciliation does not exclude Islamic organizations, other political groupings, and the leaders of armed groups operating abroad. Also seen as possible is the formation of a coalition government with those opposition political forces that will come to terms with the people's authorities, as well as with prominent figures from past regimes and "Islamic parties" inclined to follow an independent line.

Understandably, time and auspicious conditions are required to implement the policy of reconciliation. The Revolutionary Council, the declaration states, solemnly announces that as of January 15 this year the appropriate bodies of the republic are directed to cease fire from all types of weapons, suspend operations, withdraw troops to their permanent stations, discontinue artillery and air strikes at the enemy, provided it does not endanger the civilian population, and instruct the armed forces to confine themselves to guarding national frontiers, state and military installations, and to discharging other purely defensive and economic duties.

The truce will continue till July 15, 1987, provided that the other side joins it. Should both sides observe the truce it may be prolonged.

Reconciliation cannot be one way. In response to their peaceful moves, the revolu-

"Aren't we lucky: I saw off the Year of Peace as far as I could, and you have somewhere to see in the Year of the Homeless."

Cartoon by V. Arsenyev

tionary authorities expect all armed groups to cease shelling towns and villages, enterprises, military units and aircraft, to stop delivering and deploying arms and munitions within the territory of the republic, as well as mining roads and committing acts of terror and sabotage.

Provided national reconciliation is achieved, and the respective village, district, county or province declared a "zone of peace," the Revolutionary Council and the government will pledge to grant concrete state privileges to the population of the said zones, more specifically, the right to the democratic establishment of local government and administrative bodies.

A higher extraordinary commission for national reconciliation has started to function in Kabul. Its 277 members represent various strata of the population; they include prominent religious figures, former deputies and senators, and the chiefs of tribes and ethnic minorities in all the provinces of the republic. The powers and composition of locally instituted extraordinary commissions have been defined.

The higher extraordinary commission has issued appeals to the leaders of Iran, Pakistan, China and India, to U.N. Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar, the peoples of the U.N. member states, Robert Mugabe, chairman of the non-aligned movement, and its member countries, as well as to the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The messages explain the ideas and aims of the policy of national reconciliation in Afghanistan.

The Afghan mass media are commenting widely on the new constructive proposals of the People's Democratic Party and the Revolutionary Council and the government of Afghanistan. These proposals have been most optimistically received by all patriotic elements of Afghan society who realize that peace and tranquillity must come to their country as early as possible.

The ball is now in the court of those quarters which are still obstructing a solution of the conflict. These quarters must take a sober view of the situation and weigh up both their own interests and the interests of the nation. Only then will it be possible to resolve existing problems successfully. Then there will be peace in every home.

L. MIRONOV

FRANCE

Consensus Only a Dream

● WHY NOW? WHY HAS THIS WHIRLWIND ERUPTED SO DRAMATICALLY FROM HEAVEN KNOWS WHERE? WHY HAVE SOCIAL TENSIONS AMPLIFIED?

Only a few weeks ago, the less perspicacious observer might have been pardoned for thinking that the "bedfellowship" of the coalition government of big business parties which took over last March, and the Socialist President idyllically suited the nation, that national consensus had supposedly won the day.

Jacques Chirac and his cabinet appeared to have managed everything with the agility and dexterity of a juggler on a tightrope. They privatized large enterprises and granted financial privileges to the greediest capitalists; a "flexible" workweek obliging the workingman to agree meekly to the working hours his employer specified and hence to how much he earned was instituted, militant trade unionists were dismissed from enterprises in the public sector; the government connive at arbitrary racism, when immigrant workers are deported without explanation, and let the police unleash terror against the youth.

"Made in France" liberalism — modernism — Reaganism on its white horse had now broken from a trot into a headlong career. Unemployment galloped correspondingly. Mortally angered, the disinherited, seeing themselves bereft of a future, displayed mounting discontent.

French railwaymen went on strike a week before the Christmas holidays. It was a difficult decision to make as it upset holiday plans for many who had to cancel rendezvous with relatives and give up plans to relax at Alpine skiing resorts. But strategically it was wise, because it touched the entire country to the quick, calling attention to the vital problems confronting one of the most progressive sectors of the proletariat whose services are indispensable to society.

"Great Peace Journey"

● AT THE CLOSE OF LAST YEAR IN STOCKHOLM, MIKHAIL GORBACHEV'S REPLY TO AN APPEAL FROM THE ANTI-WAR ORGANIZATION THE GREAT PEACE JOURNEY WAS HANDED OVER TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MOVEMENT.

Addressing a mass rally in central Stockholm on May 12, 1985, the late Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme said that if a nuclear war were unleashed every living thing on earth would perish and human civilization would cease to exist. Today security cannot be guaranteed by new types and systems of weapons. The only alternative is to ensure universal security. The rally inaugurated the Great Peace Journey, sponsored by several Swedish women's anti-war organizations and movements. Chairwoman of the executive is ambassador Inga Thorsson, a leading Swedish public figure who at one time led the Swedish delegation to the U.N. Committee on Disarmament in Geneva. The Peace Journey circulated a questionnaire on the most vital issues of today to the governments of the U.N. member states.

"The idea of the poll," Inga Thorsson says, "emerged during the Stockholm-Helsinki-Moscow-Minsk Peace March-82. We began to word the questions and draft a plan of action. We took as our point of departure the preamble to the U.N. Charter: 'We the peoples of the United Nations are determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war . . . and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours . . .' Please note: 'We the peoples,' not governments. Which means that at the U.N. the representatives of states should act on behalf of and for their peoples, for which reason the peoples have every right to ask their governments about what they say at the U.N.

"Are governments everywhere prepared to reduce military activity, settle all military conflicts by peaceful means, apply the achievements of science and technology for the good of the peoples of the world, and ensure every people's right to dispose of its resources in order to guarantee the basic vital needs of the human being? The answers were to be sent in written form and had obligatorily to be signed."

Inga Thorsson had a reply of this nature with Mikhail Gorbachev's distinctive signature before her, when I interviewed her at her home on the southern outskirts of Stockholm.

"Sweden's anti-war organ-

An ordinary street scene in Paris. The placard says: "We live on the street, our baby is 20 months old. We are hungry. Thank you for your kindness."

From Révolution (France)

The drivers of the supersophisticated trains on which France prides itself had rebelled against the government's plans to lower their living standards. They were outraged by the exploitation of their labour in unacceptable conditions from the point of view of safety at work. The strike was not called in defence of the interests and rights of the railmen alone. It was also a gesture expressive of their sense of supreme responsibility for the fate of the whole national economy and the whole country. No wonder the government miscalculated when it refused to meet the railmen's demands, hoping that these would evoke nationwide indignation. Nor did hypocritical demagogy work either. Jacques Douffiagues, minister-delegate for transport affairs, urged "those with jobs" to show "solidarity with those without." As if the money saved from the backbreaking toil of the railmen, many of whom were to be made redundant, would suffice to create two and a half million jobs—the number of jobless in France today, according to official statistics.

Breaking all records, the strike has continued into January. At the same time, merchant seamen and dockers in all French ports on the Mediterranean, on the North Sea and the Atlantic littoral have likewise struck.

In solidarity with the railmen, Paris Metro personnel have walked out. Early this month the employees of the state-owned Electricité de France and Gaz de France also downed tools, which means that, paralyzed by the railmen's strike, the country now runs the risk of being plunged into icy darkness as well.

The French treasury, controlled by the present government, has more than enough money to satisfy the working people's basic needs. It is believed that if from this year's hugely inflated military budget, designed above all to finance nuclear arms buildup, even a small proportion were released to create new jobs and subsidize the crisis-ridden national economy, life in France would be much easier. There is also another solution. Everyone in France pays taxes. However, 10 per cent of taxpayers own 60 per cent of the nation's wealth. But the government has granted privileges to this prosperous exploitative minority, under which it pays proportionately far lower taxes than hired labour.

We cannot of course expect a redistribution of the national wealth, a fair "slicing of the national cake." For that is not the brief of the present government, as defined by the "10 per cent."

However, this government is finding it harder and harder to fulfil that brief. First the students forced it to retreat and cancel its project for the anti-democratic reform of university and college education. Then farmers and journalists on the staff of

lations, clerical movements nd trade unions energetical- supported us," she conued. "That in effect was w the new form of the ti-war movement emerged. ough its roots are here in eden, it is now worldwide. ur envoys set out to visit e countries of Europe. They resented our appeal to 27 ates.

"We decided to hand the estionnaire simultaneously the Soviet Union and the ited States at the very end the Journey. As far as the ropean states are concernd, nearly all have sent in plies. We have not receivd any answers, though, from ree capitals, Paris, London d Bonn. After Europe came Asia, Africa, Latin America and other regions of the globe. In the autumn of 1986 representatives of the Journey went out worldwide. Though we were not able to visit all U.N. member states, we did get to 120 countries. Answers are still coming in, which means that the dialogue continues."

When did you submit the message to the Soviet Union and the United States?

"Last December 5. In Moscow Vadim Zagladin had a detailed two-hour talk with our delegation, promising that we would get answers to all the questions put. In Washington our envoys were received by a petty official who did not say anything coherent."

What are your plans?

"The crucial task in the foreseeable future is to find new forms in order to reinforce the Great Peace Journey politically. We shall meet over the next few days to discuss this.

"We are well aware of how vital it is to have concrete disarmament moves such as a nuclear test ban and a drastic reduction of stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear and also chemical weapons, together with their prohibition. Regrettably, the Reagan Administration is obstinately unwilling to ban nuclear tests and reply to the initiative of the heads of state and government of five continents. For this reason we must find new, effective forms in our work.

"General Secretary Gorbachev's reply to our message is encouraging, especially where he speaks of the priority of universal human values, the vitality of the new thinking and the need for a new approach to the realities of our time. When in Moscow in early December, I read Mikhail Gorbachev's speeches in India. In them he formulated the concept of the new political thinking in the matter of security. What your leader said corresponds absolutely with our views."

D. POGORZHELSKY
our special correspondent
Stockholm

France-Presse secured their objectives. Now the government is stonewalling in the face of resolute working-class action. "How is it that the relatively new and so confident authority has found itself so quickly and greatly destabilized?" the omniscient Le Monde inquires, and cannot find an answer. The answer plainly is that in this day and age bourgeois government is neither omnipotent nor invulnerable. Nor can there be "class peace" on the terms the bourgeoisie dictates. It can only dream of consensus.

V. TSOPPI

JAPAN

Collapsed "Ceiling"

● TOKYO HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT IS ABANDONING A FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF GOVERNMENT POLICY WHICH HAD BEEN IN EFFECT SINCE 1976 AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH WHICH ARMS SPENDING SHOULD NOT EXCEED ONE PER CENT OF THE GNP.

At an emergency meeting chaired by Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, the Council on National Security Problems decided to allocate to the Defence Agency for the fiscal year 1987 the sum of 3,520 billion yens ($22 billion), 5.2 per cent more than last year. Though this is a mere 0.004 per cent over the limit, the "ceiling" that up to now restrained runaway increases in the military budget has collapsed.

The Nakasone cabinet's decision did not come as a surprise. Throughout 1986 the ruling quarters had been conditioning the public to it psychologically. Even before the July elections, which gave the Liberal Democrats a sizable majority in both houses of parliament, Nakasone said he was prepared "to shoulder any blame" for such a decision. In the second half of the year, feeling that, given the obtaining alignment of forces, it would be hard for the opposition to foil attempts to push an "above the limit" military budget through Parliament, the government demanded the abolition of "the legacy of the period of forced parity between conservatives and reformists."

The way for the "New Year surprise" was paved in September 1985, when the new five-year military programme covering the fiscal years 1986-90 and totalling 18,400 billion yens ($92 billion) was endorsed. This sum represented 1.038 per cent of the GNP forecast for the said five-year period. It was already clear then that the Liberal Democrats planned to discard the one per cent principle.

In an appreciation of Tokyo's efforts, U.S. Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger said: "We greet this with great pleasure.... This kind of increase in defence shows that Prime Minister Nakasone and Defence Minister Kurihara are more than carrying out the pledge they have made to strengthen Japan's defences."

In other countries the repeal of the one per cent ceiling on military spending has caused only concern and condemnation. The Foreign Ministry of the People's Republic of China has officially expressed its anxiety. Countries in Southeast Asia are worried. And in Japan itself, for that matter, the decision, despite all the government's tactical ploys, has provoked a storm of indignation. The draft project is to be debated in parliament and the opposition is preparing to fight the issue resolutely.

V. OVSYANNIKOV

PAKISTAN

Only an Excuse

● COMMUNAL RIOTS IN KARACHI. CABINET RESIGNS.

The official story is that the government is bowing out because it could not cope. Democracy! But this Oriental conjuring where ministerial portfolios are transferred from left hand to right, as well as the tragic events in Karachi themselves, are not at all illustrative of democracy.

The unrest in Karachi which, with its population of 7 million, is the country's largest sea and air gateway, erupted in mid-December. Sources say that army and police raided the Karachi suburb of Sohrab Goth, inhabited largely by Pashtoons ostensibly to destroy caches of drugs and weapons. In revenge the Pashtoons lashed out at Indian immigrant neighbours, Muhajirs and Bihars. The communal clashes, which developed into street fighting, continued for several days and spread to several districts of Karachi. With naval support, thousands of Pakistani regulars managed with difficulty to subdue the unrest in which over 200 people died.

Though communal strife in Pakistan doubtless looms large, other factors were plainly responsible for the bloodshed in Karachi. From the early 1980s on it has served as the basic entrepôt for shipping Pakistani heroin to Western Europe and the U.S. Though the weekly Mag claims that the godfathers of the heroin mafia are known by name, many Pakistani VIPs are involved. The Karachi law enforcement agency is riddled with corruption. Then, Afghan rebels who enjoy special standing in Pakistan are actively involved in the heroin traffic.

Still, the authorities are periodically obliged to "take action" against heroin trafficking. However, there is no "fair play" here at all. One need only recall how in the Northwest Frontier Province the shooting of Pashtoons protesting against anti-Afghan activity was passed off as an anti-drug measure. It should also be noted that the poverty-stricken suburb of Sohrab Goth is not where the heroin godfathers live. It is simply that army detachments were rushed in and houses bulldozed where it was easiest and most convenient. Sohrab Goth was made the scapegoat, without it being realized that violence would then erupt. Or was it that only the scale of the violence had not been foreseen?

This time Afghan residents in Karachi were victimized and evicted to beyond the city limits. Alarmed by popular discontent and mounting crime, the Pakistani authorities had already employed such measures, as, for instance, in Peshawar crammed with Afghan counterrevolutionaries. However, it had always been unsuccessful. As for Karachi, we learn that the Afghan immigrants provoked the bloody clashes.

The Karachi slaughter was sufficient reason for the cabinet to resign. However, it was only a pretext. As the London Guardian observes, "the government has been hit by several serious financial scandals recently." It was decided to give the ministers involved in these scandals a gentlemanly shove: instead of being sacked a collective resignation was timed to coincide with the Karachi events. Small wonder that the reshuffle did not involve key portfolios. Six ministers, including the Minister of the Interior who would appear to be directly responsible for the events, remain in the cabinet.

January in Karachi has begun with more unrest. The police are now dispersing Muhajirs demonstrating against the arrest of their leader.

E. LVOV

Renewal

This is a word one often hears as the country discusses the results of the recent Vietnamese Communist Party congress

From our special correspondent
VLADIMIR ZHITOMIRSKY

At Party conferences in the run-up to the congress and at the congress itself both achievements and mistakes were openly discussed. It was stressed that the Vietnamese Communists had been inspired by the decisions of the 27th congress of the CPSU, which set Soviet society on the course of acceleration.

Results and Prospects

Opening the supreme communist forum, Nguyen Van Linh, who was elected General Secretary of the Party at the conclusion of the congress, stressed that Vietnam had achieved major successes in the building of socialism and in defending the country. Promising signs of renewal, examples of skillfull economic management and front-rank work collectives are to be found in many parts of the country.

Nevertheless, he went on, these achievements should not obscure from view certain negative aspects of the present situation, especially in the economic and social fields, as well as in other spheres. The Party and the people cannot tolerate such a state of affairs. To rectify the situation, noted Nguyen Van Linh, the sixth Party congress must initiate a process of change in the Party's thinking, style of work, organizational structure, and in the composition of the Party cadres.

The introductory speech set the tone for the whole congress. As the political report of the Central Committee stressed, agriculture and industry have registered a growth after the slump of 1979-80. Some progress has been made in socialist transformation. Most peasants in the south have switched to collective farming. The people and the army have scored major victories in defending their country and ensuring political security. The report, however, concentrated not on achievements, but on outstanding problems, boldly revealing errors and miscalculations. On the whole, it said, the targets set by the fifth Party congress have not been fulfilled. "At present two tendencies have to be overcome: on the one hand, conservatism, inertia and the reluctance to work in a new way, and on the other, haste, a simplistic approach, the desire to resolve all problems quickly and at once," the report pointed out. It is only when we have left these obstacles behind us that we will be able to stabilize the social and economic situation as a whole and create further prerequisites for accelerating socialist industrialization in the coming period. We can thus achieve the overall goal set by the sixth congress of completing the initial stage in the building of socialism in Vietnam.

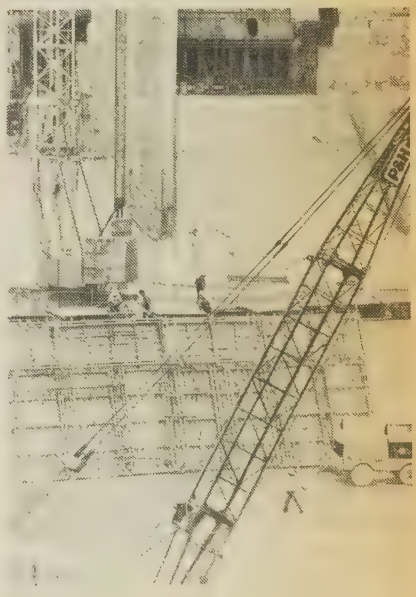
Hydroelectric station builders Bui Ngoc Hoan and Nagim Zaripov are good friends.

The Party has gained valuable experience from the practice of the past years, notes the congress resolution. The most important lessons are: first, in all its activities the Party must unflinchingly follow the principle that "the people is the basis," and provide and develop the right of the working people to collective management of the economy; second, the Party must always proceed from practice, take into account objective laws and act accordingly; third, the potential of the people must be combined with the potential of the age in the new conditions; fourth, it is necessary to build a party capable of leading the nation in the process of socialist revolution.

Proceeding from the existing situation, the sixth congress launched three economic programmes as the main components of the plan for 1986-90, dealing respectively with food, consumer goods and export products. Concrete ways of implementing these programmes have been determined. As a result by the end of the five-year period food production will have reached 22-23 million tons (calculated in equivalent rice units), the output of consumer goods is to grow at an average annual rate of 13-15 per cent and exports are to increase by 70 per cent as compared with the preceding five-year period.

Soviet Communists are confident that the realistic decisions of the congress would usher in a new phase in the political and economic development of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Yegor Ligachev, head of the CPSU delegation, said. He pledged continued Soviet assistance to the Vietnamese people. For their part,

Tri An. When this hydroelectric station is completed, it will supply electricity to many provinces in south Vietnam.



Vietnamese Communists stressed at the congress that greater cohesion and all-round cooperation with the Soviet Union are the cornerstone of the foreign policy of the CPV and the Vietnamese state.

From Hoa Binh to Tri An

The subject of cooperation and Soviet economic assistance to Vietnam had arisen en route from Moscow to Hanoi. Most of the passengers on board the 350-seat jumbo jet were young Vietnamese training in the Soviet Union. They were going home on leave. Many of them are quite fluent in Russian. Do Minh Ha, 24, told me that he is working at a prefab ferroconcrete plant in Leninsk-Kuznetsky in Siberia. It's very cold in winter there, he said. But he doesn't mind because he has many friends and enjoys his work. He was going to spend his holiday with his fiancée, a schoolteacher in his native town. Everything had to be ready for the wedding.

Nikolai Mironov, a Russian, was on his way to Vietnam after a holiday at home. An experienced tunnel-digger, he worked on the construction of several hydropower plants. He is now working on a hydraulic complex at Hoa Binh near Hanoi. "Come and see the construction site!" he said.

I availed myself of the invitation at the earliest opportunity. The complex on the Black River is impressive indeed, not by reason of its size, but its compactness. Bold engineering thought has gone into the design of the two million-kilowatt power plant, the biggest in Southeast Asia.

Soviet-Vietnamese construction projects are scattered all over the country. On the way to the oil extracting enterprise Vietsovpetro one passes hevea plantations launched with Soviet assistance. Another joint project is a hydropower plant at Tri An.

The normally merciless midday sun had been cooled by a haze, and the 60-kilometre road from Ho Chi Minh to the Tri An power plant therefore seemed shorter than usual. The highway was good too. It was "strategic highway No. ..." built by Americans for their jeeps and Fords. But the Vietnamese patriots frustrated their plans.

Tri An will have an impact on the life of the area in several ways, says Yuri Kirsanov, chief Soviet expert at the construction project. It will bring electricity to homes and factories. Its power will be used by oilmen in Vung Tau, and will help irrigate thousands of hectares of land. It will improve water supplies to Ho Chi Minh, the country's biggest city, as well as to the city of Bien Hoa. The possibilities of fish farming and fishing will greatly increase. The dams will give protection from the tidal waves that occur from time to time. Experts believe the water reservoir will have a favourable impact on the climate.

Once I saw photographs of a familiar construction project in a show-window in a Ho Chi Minh street. Next to the photograph was a list of provinces with sums of money against the name of each: provinces are vying with each other in donating funds for this national project. I learned about the details of the competition, in which there are no winners or losers, from Tran Minh Triet, a member of the bureau of the Fatherland Front city committee.

People realize that the government takes care of them and offers each of them a chance to contribute to the common cause. The people of Ho Chi Minh and the neighbouring provinces to be served by the new power plant have organized a fund-raising campaign. By November last year almost 38 million dongs had been collected. In addition, there are food donations, with each province supplying the builders weekly with vegetables, fruit and meat. The scale of contributions can be judged from the number of workers on the construction site: 10,000 on the main building site, and another 20,000 in the flood zone where tree felling is being completed. And it should be remembered that the local people are not rich and their donations represent quite a sacrifice.

Local people often visit the construction site to see how work is proceeding. The builders are living up to their expectations. They have already built roads and are placing concrete in the main structures. The mounting of the basic equipment has started. The damming of the Dong Nai River will begin in January. The first of the four turbines is to be launched ahead of schedule, in time for the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution. A powerful turbine built in Leningrad is to arrive soon. Thanks to a creative approach, accurate technical projections and extensive Soviet help in personnel, technology and knowhow, it has been possible to save two years.

The Soviet hydro-engineer Nagim Zaripov is 45. He is 15 years older than his Vietnamese friend Bui Ngoc Hoan, and far more experienced too, having taken part in the building of major power plants at Toktogul and Kurpsai in the U.S.S.R. Hoan, though 30, already holds an executive post at the construction site. He has graduated from the water economy institute in Hanoi and worked at the Hoa Binh project. A broad-minded person, he has worked on this construction site from its first day. Of course, he would like to work strictly in his own field, but he constantly has to attend to the most diverse matters. Asked if he is always on top of his job, the young executive said, "not always." It should not be forgotten that four in every five builders at Hoa Binh have no previous experience in the field, and this creates a difficulty. But in general he likes his job.

Concerns of a Big City

Power shortage is not the only scourge of Ho Chi Minh. It has plenty of other problems, both objective and ones that could have been avoided. Nguyen Son, a full-time official of the city Party committee in Ho Chi Minh, told me what is being done to solve these problems. We were talking on an observation platform at the top of the Ben Thanh Hotel. A whole city district was in full view. The tall building across the street bore traces of a huge Sanyo advertisement, which had been removed. The small square is flooded with bicycles and motorcycles. According to statistics, there are 1.5 million bicycles, 222,000 motorcycles, 46,000 pedicabs, and 64,000 cars and buses in the country. The roar and incessant hooting of all this traffic reaches us on the rooftop.

"After liberation," said Nguyen Son, "the city with its population of 4.5 million had 500,000 unemployed, and about as many ex-servicemen of the puppet regime. We had to create a million jobs. We appealed to former country people to return to their villages. Some followed our advice. Others responded to our call and went to develop new economic areas, mostly as members of youth volunteer teams. Another group of people went into private crafts. We still have 200,000 jobless." Nguyen Son stressed that the measures taken had considerably reduced the population of Ho Chi Minh and slowed down the natural population growth from 2.5 to 1.7 per cent. "But very many people have refused to leave the city. They find it hard to get used to farm work. Many are deterred from leaving the city by the difficult conditions in the new economic areas. Some of those who went there have since returned. In short, every year we create about 100,000 new jobs, but unemployment is still a major problem.

"Many people have no habit of productive work," Nguyen Son went on. "Under the Americans half the families in Saigon engaged in trade. This tradition makes itself felt today. The number of people in trade has dropped, but it still stands at 200,000 families, about a third of the city population. Most of them get their goods from relatives abroad.

A street scene in Ho Chi Minh City. Photos by author

"There are a lot of unresolved problems," Nguyen Son pointed out. "Ho Chi Minh, which accounts for a third of the nation's industrial output (over 50 per cent in textiles) is short of raw materials. In former times many plants used imported raw materials. Now we are searching for ways to solve this problem. Export and import is controlled by central bodies. But we have asked for greater autonomy in this sphere, so that we can take advantage of our links with twin cities in socialist countries. Local shoe factories, for example, are successfully cooperating with their Soviet counterparts."

Much has already been done in the city. Socialist transformations are taking place, the public sector is being consolidated, and the supply of the population with rice has been organized.

Accolade for a Farm

Dong Van Hue was forcibly conscripted into the puppet army but deserted at the first opportunity. A peasant's son, he had by that time acquired some experience of the struggle against the corrupt regime, having taken part in the movement along with his three brothers. Hue was arrested in 1961. His 18 months in prison only increased his hatred of the regime. The first mobilization campaign of 1964 was followed by another three years later. After being recruited a second time he did not manage to escape. He was assigned to a signal service corps. He maintained communication between units... and with the patriots. He told them about operations being planned and passed on other important information. Simultaneously, he helped organize food supplies from the local population to the guerrillas.

Dong Van Hue was known for his fighting prowess, his quick peasant wit and conscientious attitude to work. That is why he was elected chairman of the Binh Tay cooperative organized in the Tien Giang province in late 1979. Initially, after the liberation of the south, peasants were organized into teams. Later it was decided to form a collective farm with 485 hectares of land and 3,198 people, of whom 1,400 were able-bodied. Things are going well. Formerly they brought in one rice crop a year. Now they harvest two. Of course, they have had to work hard to make this possible. Among other things, they have built a dam. Now they use sea water for irrigation only three months a year instead of five, with the result that the rice yield has nearly doubled.

Rice has ceased to be the only crop. The farm chairman had the idea of starting to grow watermelons. He suggested this to the farmers and told them that watermelons grow well in other areas. Although watermelons had never been cultivated here before, the peasants agreed. To begin with, they planted an area of 1,000 square metres. The biggest fruit weighed three kilogrammes. Clearly, the land and the climate were suitable for watermelons.

Dong Van Hue, a tall lanky man, is dressed like a peasant. He sounds relaxed, frank and competent. "Why sit in the office?" he asked. "It's high time we looked round the farm." I cast a last look at the office: earthen floor, cane roof, rough hewn tables. A woman accountant was working at a table, using a modern Japanese microcalculator. Later I saw a lot of concrete buildings and asked the chairman why his office was so shabby. He waved the question aside: there are more important things than the office.

He is right. Take the pig farm, for example. I saw huge pink boars and sows in cement pens. My host told me about the practices accepted on the farm. Cooperative members can have a sow for themselves on condition that they give two piglets to the farm every year. The farm provides the feeds, which it buys from the state. Peasants can also get, free, a 10-kilogramme piglet and 300 kilogrammes of fodder. In eight months' time they have to return the pig to the farm. The cooperative pays a considerable sum for any pig weighing more than 67 kilogrammes. Normally pigs weigh over 80 kilogrammes. So both the farm and the farmers stand to gain. The norm is set in such a way as to ensure a steady rise in people's living standards. The same system operates in poultry farming.

I was shown round the shops which produce 11 types of handicrafts; a kindergarten (the daily fee is 9 dongs, of which the parents contribute 5, the cooperative 3, and the district 1), and a medical centre with a chemist's shop. We entered a peasant's house built recently from cement. Adjacent to the rooms is a pen for domestic animals. A girl of about five was washing her three-year-old sister, pouring water from a dipper. The little girl cried, but the elder one continued with grim determination: her parents, now at work, had told her to do it.

"We are also thinking of introducing a retirement pension system," said Hue, as we walked along. "We have a social security fund and a sick person can get between 500 and 1,000 dongs. We also offer benefits in some other cases too."

Recently the cooperative was awarded the title of Hero of Labour. This is in recognition not only of the farm's constantly growing assets and its punctual supplies of produce to the state, but also of its constant and effective concern for improving the peasants' living standards.

People at every level of the 60 million-strong Vietnamese nation are now thinking about this as well. It is this concern that permeates the decisions of the sixth congress of the CPV, which mapped out ways of achieving this goal.

Hanoi—Ho Chi Minh—Moscow

READERS' FORUM

FOLLOW-UP

"I think we have already reached a technological level that makes all talk of disarmament foolish and futile.... If our country genuinely wants peace, it must dismantle all nuclear weapons, leaving only a small number in its territory as stationary mines," V. Vashkevich of Riga wrote to us in a letter published in our issue No. 48 for last year, along with comments from associate editor A. Lebedev. We now print several comments from readers.

Ploughs or Explosions?

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Having read V. Vashkevich's letter in one of your issues, I was so agitated that I decided to write to you. V. Vashkevich and others like him think it is nuclear weapons that are holding the world back from inevitable war. To bear this out, he cites the example of sworn enemies gathered in one room, and claims that if they are armed there will be no fighting between them. However, in a situation like that, a single careless movement is enough for a human being to take leave of his senses and act entirely out of the fear that someone else might steal a march on him in striking a blow. Then, suppose one of these sworn enemies were mad? Of course, it is hardly likely that war could break out today because of one madman. But on the other hand, one should not forget that it is not only the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. that are in possession of nuclear weapons. It is believed that they are already part or will soon be part of the arsenals of South Africa, Israel and Pakistan, countries which, after all, are not conspicuous for their love of peace. If they were to use nuclear weapons, the conflict might, who knows, escalate into global war. Or suppose some "overly clever" computer, upon which the decision to press the button depends, were suddenly to go haywire.

We certainly cannot abandon the effort for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

S. MIRONCHIK
Leningrad, U.S.S.R.

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Reading what many writers have to say about the problems of war and peace in this nuclear age, we increasingly frequently encounter the thesis that, since a nuclear war could annihilate human civilization, Clausewitz's classic formula to the effect that war is the continuation of politics by other means is supposedly "meaningless." You also make this point in your Polemics.

Recent studies by Soviet and foreign scientists have effectively demonstrated that a nuclear war will have no winners and that, bearing in mind the likely ecological and medico-biological consequences, the firing of any missile would be suicidal. However, to this day the Clausewitz formula is still vital, warning humanity of the threat that emanates from all who try to proceed with their madcap policies by military means.

V. FRANGULOV
Moscow, U.S.S.R.

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Allow me to take issue with A. Lebedev. Only the presence of a nuclear potential is a deterrent to a third, nuclear world war. Without this potential, the roar of tanks and armoured carriers would long ago have deafened all of Europe and Asia. Would the U.S. then have tolerated Cuba as a next-door neighbour? What force other than a nuclear potential can deter a potential aggressor? Answer that question!

Look how many wars there are today on earth—Iran-Iraq, Nicaragua, Lebanon, Afghanistan.... Where is that progressive humanity that is capable of affecting their course even a little? As I recall, it protested against the neutron bomb, the cruise missile and the like. But it got nowhere. Everywhere peace-lovers speak and meet, but wars continue on the earth. Generally, as I see it, these people have absolutely no effect on the fate of peace.

Y. SEROV
Moscow, U.S.S.R.

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I should like to say that Mr Vashkevich is greatly mistaken in thinking that talk of disarmament is foolish and futile. I think he is very lucky to be living in a country where, as I see it, there is no need to demonstrate with placards against the militarization of old Mother Earth and, now, of space. After all, the Soviet Union is opposed to disarmament, as is illustrated by all its peace bids, about which we know enough. It is quite a different thing here in Britain. The island is full of missiles, aircraft and other weapons, both ours and foreign. Then this arsenal is continually being augmented and improved. We are becoming hostages in our own home and have nobody to rely upon but ourselves. The time to make a choice has gone. It is now time to act, and with vigour. Even those whom it was virtually impossible to mobilize and get out into to realize t why, along in Europe a disarmamen parliament Mr Vashke never felt fear for his his children would have

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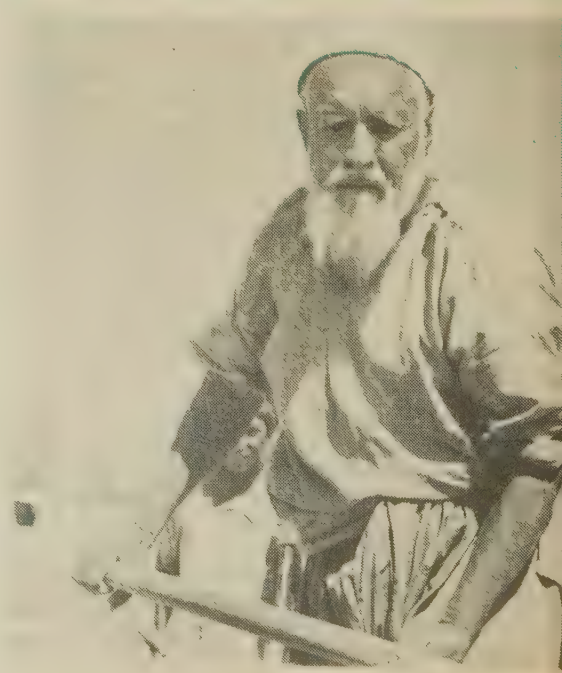
The write Times simpl we Soviet any rate, th I read his outlined a for the comp lition of nu year 2000. implementat ple through enough to r sober intell something Why, the mines" whe plete elimin earth must b ed by the not by the shells. We for universa

A READER'S CONTRIBUTI



YOU NEED TO BE BRAVE

I should like to describe some of the conditions in my city, whose "fathers" tout the slogan "I Love New York."

We have some 40,000 homeless men and women and abandoned children who sleep in hallways, streets and subway stations. These unfortunates hunt for food in garbage cans, beg and wander about in rags. Thousands of crimes a year are committed in the subways, and incomparably more in the streets and in homes. There are no fewer than ten murders a day, often much more at weekends. Organized crime syndicates control major business (all known to the police, which does nothing as it is steeped in corruption). Prostitutes ply our streets; pornography is a thriving business. In effect, one in three schoolchildren is a drug addict, with a new form "crack" so common that even juniors "toy" with it. Our schools are policed to prevent racial outbreaks. People are afraid to walk at night for fear of being mugged. Apartments are burned so as to drive out older tenants, leaving the apartments available for re-renting at appallingly increased rates.

As a teacher I find it possible to teach children who are hungry or brought up in an atmosphere of violence and fear for the future, only the bare essential—to be brave and optimistic as far as possible in this situation.

Lawrence BROWNE
New York, U.S.A.

OPINIONS

TIME FINALLY FOR A U.S. MOVE

The Soviet Union is ready to adhere and will adhere to its 18-month-long unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests. However, after the U.S.A.'s first nuclear explosion we shall resume nuclear testing. So our government stated when extending its moratorium for the fifth time.

This is a very wise decision. In effect we are giving the Americans one more chance to stop to think. But if that does not happen our country is always ready to display good will but not weakness.

Some people may say that the moratorium should have been extended for another definite term, a month or two, as this move would serve to reduce the threat of war. However, the Soviet Union has already done everything in its power, and it is now up to the United States to move towards détente.

For a long time the Soviet Union patiently awaited a positive response from the White House. It has been waiting so long that it simply cannot do so anymore. After all, the security of the Soviet people is at stake. Meanwhile, the situation today is such that by taking advantage of the silence at our proving grounds the Americans have greatly added to the sophistication of their nuclear weapons. There is no need for us to seek military superiority, yet at the same time we cannot agree to U.S. military superiority. The Soviet-American relationship is a complex process, but it is my conviction that it should develop on the basis of parity. But if one of the two sides is reluctant to make a single move to meet the other side halfway, that means the other side should draw its own conclusions from the resulting situation. Patience cannot be tested indefinitely, and eventually the U.S. leadership must realize this.

I am convinced that most ordinary Americans want nuclear explosions to stop at home too. We often hear American representatives say what extensive democracy they have in the U.S. So what stands in the way of the White House demonstrating this in action and, heeding the majority opinion, banning the explosions? There is still time to take that decision.

Yet, while there is no positive answer from the U.S. to our offer we may be obliged to resume testing. So was the moratorium useless, an empty waste of talk and time? No, and again, no! It is hard to exaggerate its significance for the peace movement. The people of the earth have distinctly seen the reality of nuclear disarmament, the concrete ways and means by which it can be implemented.

Y. LOTSHTEIN
Moscow, U.S.S.R.

JUNGLE LAW

America bets only on sure things —witness the U.S. answer to your moratorium on tests. Aggressive imperialism would push through its objectives more openly, more blatantly, if sure of impunity. I would say that Soviet responses—that stem, perhaps, as a result of communist breeding, responding to human longings, but forgetting the conditions of the real world outside that still labours under jungle law—are partly responsible. The mentality of Neanderthals must be thoroughly studied and accurately assessed, especially as regards those seeking world supremacy.

Joseph SPARACINO
Gibsons, Canada

SOME MERELY TALK, OTHERS ACT

I write on behalf of the membership of our local peace committee. A new surging tide of anti-war action is afoot in Italy. The Soviet peace bids, which opened up the broadest of prospects for the masses and for individuals to express their resolve, have helped us to invigorate the effort for our future. Among these initiatives I would like to specially single out your country's repeated prolongation of its unilateral moratorium on nuclear explosions. This bold action has shown people the path humanity should follow to see in the 21st century with deliverance from nuclear arms. It has struck a most powerful blow at Washington's empty talk of its love of peace and desire for détente.

Enzo LANINI
Lucca, Italy

Human Genetics or Inhuman Genetics?

Interview with Professor YURI RYCHKOV

Genetics is a fashionable word, but few laymen know much about the problems, the subject and the aims of the science it stands for. Genetic engineering has attracted a great deal of attention over the past few years, and attempts at genetic weapons have been reported. Is that possible? Lev Yelin and Leonid Mlechin of New Times have been finding out from Professor Rychkov, who is human genetics laboratory chief at the Nikolai Vavilov General Genetics Institute attached to the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences.

To begin with, Professor, could you say a few words about the problems your laboratory deals with?

No laboratory can tackle all the problems of human genetics single-handed, so we at our institute have initiated a trend called population genetics. Human genetics is normally associated with problems of medicine, and its best-known branch is concerned with hereditary diseases. We are now concentrating on the healthy human genotype.

The main problem facing population genetics can be illustrated by a simple example: each of us sitting here at this table is totally unlike the others. This is due to the variety of individual genetic makeups, the scientific term for which is polymorphism. This property is much more strongly pronounced in man than in any other living creature on earth. This outward individual variety, which instantly leaps to the eye, comes from the unique human genotype. Of the five billion people living in the world today, no two genotypes are exactly alike, and this has been true of all past generations as well.

Duplication of the genotype is impossible except in identical twins—an exception which only proves the rule. If the twins have been brought up in different families, they may be somewhat unalike—but negligibly as compared with the natural differences between two individuals selected at random.

We are busy ascertaining the nature and biological significance of polymorphism. Its main function is to ensure the survival of the entire population, and not only of separate individuals. In other words, human beings have to be genetically dissimilar in order to survive.

The problem of hereditary genetic polymorphism has an applied aspect. I mean the embryonic stage of human life. It is only after a baby is born that doctors step in to keep it alive. But throughout the prenatal period a foetus remains at the mercy of nature and has "to go it alone" with little if any outside help. It would seem that the foetus is safe. However, the mother herself can put her unborn baby in mortal danger if the genetic differences between her and the father are so great that the embryo—which inherits genes from both parents—becomes actually foreign to her. This results in a latent genetic conflict the outcome of which is often tragic. Genetic polymorphism has a reverse side. This factor of survival exacts a heavy toll. At least half of all conceptions end in embryo death.

Isn't that an exaggeration?

No. It passes unnoticed, because what matters to society is to save babies that have already seen the light. But in the final analysis, every such case is a family tragedy.

Of the five billion people living in the world today, no two genotypes are exactly alike, and this has been true of all past generations as well.

Can anything be done about it, any preventive measures taken?

This is a natural process, and nature is not to be tampered with.... We must bear in mind, above all, the important role played by genetic diversity which produces varied personality traits and to which the human population owes its plasticity with regard to environmental effects.

Intervention is possible and necessary only in an emergency. Determining an expectant mother's rhesus factor is now common clinical practice, for instance. Rhesus incompatibility is a classic manifestation of genetic incompatibility which in this case medicine has learned to overcome.

The impression is that genetics simply states facts. It knows that prospective parents do not match, but is unable—or unwilling—to do anything about it.

I think I see your meaning, but if I'm right you're going too far. I could mention several ways of dealing with the situation, off the cuff, only in this case we may easily transcend the confines of genetics and slip into eugenics—attempts of breeding an "ideal race," a superman.

There exist other practical applications for our knowledge. Take kidney transplants, for instance. This operation is now performed fairly often, but selecting a compatible donor is extremely difficult. But if we know the genetic characteristics of a patient that have to be taken into account as criteria for compatibility, and if we know their distribution pattern throughout the country, finding the right donor would be easier.

Another example is wound healing. No one is guaranteed against getting hurt, men least of all, but treating bodily injuries seems to be a surgeon's preserve. Actually, population genetics can also be of help here. Statistical records in the field of surgery have been kept for a century, virtually since

Pirogov's time. Over this period, the incidence of suppuration in wounds has not decreased! And this in spite of increasingly efficient methods of asepsis, and patient, instrument and ward disinfection, in spite of antibiotics! The very microflora which causes wound suppuration has changed several times. Nevertheless, the incidence of suppuration inflammations remains at a steady 13 per cent! Why? It has turned out that whether a wound heals easily or suppurates depends on the specific patient's genotype. We have succeeded in finding the few genetic systems which indicate the likelihood of wound suppuration in advance.

Does this make the choice of ideal soldiers and the reduction of losses theoretically possible?

Of course. Now blood group and rhesus factor are indicated in passports. As far as soldiers are concerned, the characteristics of the genetic systems responsible for wound healing can be recorded on their identification cards so that doctors know what kind of treatment to administer in each particular case.

There is a contradiction here: on the one hand, genetics makes it possible to select ideal soldiers and, in general, people perfectly suited to certain hazardous professions; on the other, the artificial formation of such contingents may have an adverse effect on genetic diversity and even doom mankind to extinction. Is that right?

Any genetically standardized population is doomed to extinction. Reactionary regimes have always regarded human diversity as an impediment and have tried to iron it out. Fascism is the most striking illustration of this. Physical variety provides the material groundwork for individualization. Therefore, attempts to reduce physical variety lead to the depersonalization of society. A depersonalized society is easier to govern, of course, but it runs counter to the laws of nature.

Speaking of certain people being suitable for certain jobs, genetic screening has been introduced in some Western countries. Private and state companies and even military organizations deny employment to, and even dismiss those found to possess the genes of sickle-cell anemia. When reporting on such cases, newsmen often use the word "racism" because "bad" genes are usually found in blacks and members of national minorities. Is there a way to purge scientific screening from racist practices?

The problem of genetic screening was posed before us by athletes who make the most of human potential. Obviously, if two athletes are similar in character and temperament, skill and experience, the one with the superior genotype will emerge the winner (we cannot as yet assess this superiority numerically). In other words, he is hereditarily better suited for work involving acute oxygen deficiency, colossal mechanical strain and split-second reactions.

It is perfectly OK to deny sickle-cell anemia victims enrolment in flying schools. Such applicants would never make fliers; they would simply die of blood coagulation at a high altitude with their kind of genetic makeup. Therefore, I regard screening as an analysis of biological human factors, as an approach to real human biology which the world—our country especially—has ignored for so long. However, everything has a seamy side, and any knowledge can be used for evil purposes. It is up to society to help every person, with any genotype, find fulfilment.

Let us discuss genetic engineering and its prospects, if you don't mind. Great hopes are pinned on it, but one can't help wondering if it is ethical to interfere in natural genetic processes! And furthermore: what if the interference results in the emergence of new microorganisms! Can there appear—in real life, and not only in science fiction—a monstrous virus modern medicine will not be able to cope with!

If we regard justified interference in genetic structures and mechanisms as unethical, we must accuse science at large, and not only genetics, of this mortal sin. In the final analysis, you can only learn about the inner workings of things by probing into them. Deliberately to turn a blind eye to the genetic basis of human life for the reason that cognition inevitably does man harm as well as good is tantamount to a return to primeval taboos. Incidentally, no discovery on record has been purely a blessing, free from evil. Genetic engineering is no exception, and thinking otherwise would be like believing in miracles.

Let us then look at the evil consequences genetic engineering is fraught with. Biological weapons are decades old. Japan used them in China,

and the U.S. in Korea. However, all attempts to develop the means of delivery and guarantee "accurate hits" failed. Even the ceramic bombs thought up by General Shiro Ishii, chief of the Kwantung Army's Detachment No. 731, proved inefficient—the bacteria died too early to cause epidemics of catastrophic proportions. The present level of medical science guarantees the nipping of any epidemic in the bud. So the U.S. biological weapons development centre concentrates today—to judge from press reports—on projects connected with genetic engineering. In 1985, the Pentagon carried out more than 70 experiments in this field which cost it $68 million. In its report to a House committee in May 1986, the Pentagon pointed out that genetic engineering techniques had, for the first time, paved the way for deadly efficient biological warfare. It meant the genetically mutated virus immune to heat and cold capable of invading a cell, using or destroying it. Is this weapon a realistic proposition?

Indeed, genetic engineering as applied to viruses is regarded as the only way to make efficient biological weapons. Viruses are subject to rapid transformations—hence the possibility of breeding the most dangerous type. Ever deadlier strains can be obtained. Upon being introduced into a new medium, however, the virus will continue to change its properties and may ultimately become harmless again.

Another danger is that the virus is capable of integrating itself into a DNA molecule. Research findings over the past decades bear witness to the fact that the human genome does contain such heterologous genes. Named mobile, and occurring in the most varied parts of the DNA molecule, they become active at times and are believed to cause grave diseases, cancer included.

In the same report, the Pentagon mentions plans for introducing heterologous genes into the DNA molecule sections responsible for mood, behaviour and mental state.

We know of hundreds of genes responsible for various functions and properties of the human organism. Therefore I don't think it too hard to imagine a certain virus as a weapon—i. e., a virus which would be integrated not merely into a DNA molecule, but into a definite part of it with a view to suppressing or changing certain vital functions of the human organism.

Is it really possible to develop the so-called ethnic weapons to be used against individual race or ethnic groups whose genotypes make them predisposed towards certain diseases? The South African army's biological warfare detachment is looking into the possibility of breeding viruses and other microorganisms which will affect black Africans only.... The U.S. army's Military Review magazine writes of the population of Southeast Asia lacking a certain enzyme. As a result, the local people are vulnerable to some pathogenes which other peoples generally adapt to. There is evidence of Pentagon-employed scientists looking for genetic disorders which the peoples of the developing world—but not white U.S. residents—are susceptible to.

> Reactionary regimes have always regarded human diversity as an impediment and have tried to iron it out.

Few people know that white settlers used (albeit intuitively) bacteriological weapons, among others, against the American Indians. The genetic makeup of the Amerindians is such that they do not build up immunity to smallpox. The white settlers noticed this, and scattered smallpox victims' clothes around Indian settlements, exterminating the local population. That was a case of using ethnic weapons of directional type.

Who can ethnic weapons be targeted on? As we have already mentioned, any population is polymorphous. There are as many genotypes as there are individuals. But all genotypes are composed of the same genes, so those engaged in the development of such weapons probably hope to find the means of affecting definite genes, preferably those confined to one race or one nation. Such genes could well have emerged together with the given ethnic community. They keep within the confines of this community and, at the same time, spread so fast that all its members have them. The American Indians are a case in point.

Are there other examples of such "ethnic" genes?

Most genes are spread universally, although the pattern of incidence of certain genes is far from uniform. Sickle-cell anemia, for instance, is characteristic of the Negroid race, but the genes occur in the Mediterranean and even find their way to our country, to Central Asia and the Caucasus, although their incidence here is low. Even among black Africans, however, the incidence of this disorder is not more than 25 per cent. Consequently, it doesn't make much sense to develop weapons depending on this gene for their action. The important thing is that the existence of such genes cannot be ruled out in principle; therefore, it is necessary to study and know population structure. Lack of such knowledge is becoming dangerous in itself.

We have discussed the problem of interfering in the genetic structure of the organism. There has been talk in the world press recently about the AIDS disease being of artificial origin. Does this conjecture stand scientific criticism, in your opinion?

I'm not sure that it does, although one circumstance associated with AIDS merits attention, to my mind. Supposing the AIDS virus has indeed been programmed artificially to integrate into the DNA structure. Incidentally, it hits exactly those genes whose loss is irreparable—the immune response genes. But such integration can be achieved on condition that the size of the target and the properties of its neighbours are known, and that the virus possesses the molecular-genetic parameters required to invade the predetermined part of the DNA.

Next to the immune response genes—which the AIDS virus puts out of action—are those of tissue incompatibility. In the 1970s, these genes were given thorough structural study in connection with solving the problems associated with organ and tissue transplantation. At the same time, the immune response genes were plotted on the genetic map, and their size and molecular structure ascertained. The successes achieved in bringing out the fine structure of tissue incompatibility genes coincided, suddenly, with the emergence of a disease that blocks the immune response genes! That is, the AIDS virus, which blocks the immune response, struck exactly after scientists had learned all about the neighbouring genes! For all we know, this may be mere coincidence....

■

Apartheid Regime in Deep Crisis

January 8 marked the 75th anniversary of the African National Congress of South Africa, leader of the struggle to abolish apartheid, and on this occasion our correspondent for southern Africa N. Reshetnyak and TASS correspondent in Zambia S. Kamensky were granted an interview by ANC Secretary-General Alfred Nzo.

"For many years the oppressed people of South Africa and other democratic forces in our country have been waging an anti-racist struggle for liberation," Alfred Nzo said. "In this struggle successes of no mean magnitude have been achieved. The terrorist regime of apartheid is in the throes of deep-seated, irreversible crisis. What are its symptoms? In the first place, we see that even by means of the harshest reprisals the racists have failed to check our people's advance to freedom. In the decades of the anti-racist struggle the black working class has become the leading force of the masses. It displayed great activity in the difficult conditions of the national emergency promulgated last June. The miners are its vanguard. Realizing that apartheid is based on the complete denial of political rights to black workers, they increasingly frequently put forward political demands during their strikes. The establishment of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which adheres to the positions of revolutionary struggle, represents a major gain for our proletariat.

"One further symptom of the crisis that has hit the racist regime is the shrinking of its social base. More and more whites are joining the ranks of the democratic movement. Many whites including Afrikaners, the regime's bedrock support, are afflicted with uncertainty, even despair.

"Never before," Alfred Nzo continued, "have we enjoyed such broad backing from the international community as today. The governments of the imperialist powers have found themselves in a quandary. Indeed, by continuing to support the apartheid regime they are in effect opposing the demands made by their own peoples to introduce economic sanctions against the racist state. Under public pressure even some transnationals are winding up operations in South Africa.

"The ruling circles of the leading Western countries fear that further exacerbation of the situation in South Africa may result in their losing their economic positions there. For this reason they are urging the South African government to negotiate with the representatives of the black majority. However, on the whole the West does not do more than issue such calls.

"In this year of 1987, the black majority of the population of South Africa will undoubtedly step up its struggle, the struggle for the installation of popular power. Though this will not come overnight, it is the goal for which we persistently strive. 'Forward to popular power!' is the slogan, rallying to which we shall intensify our struggle. To this end it is necessary to consolidate the anti-racist organizations, more specifically the United Democratic Front (UDF), the basic mobilizing force of South Africa's mass democratic movement. At the same time the underground system of the ANC will be consolidated. The ANC's fighting arm, Umkhonto we sizwe (The Spear of the Nation), will strike still stronger blows at the enemy."

The ANC's Secretary-General further said: "The Reagan Administration pretends to be an honest go-between in the solution of our region's problems. That is far from so. In fact, Washington and Pretoria are allies in the drive against the ANC. They are assailing it more stringently from anti-communist positions and intensifying their vicious attacks against all who support the ANC, more specifically the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries. The U.S.A.'s purpose is to isolate the ANC from its traditional ally, the Communist Party of South Africa. In short, Washington's design is clear. It is that if the African National Congress, without whose participation the solution of the problems of South Africa is impossible, seeks Western recognition, it must be restructured but in such a way as to make it no longer possible for it to head the revolutionary struggle.

"We denounce Washington's policy of arrogant blackmail of the countries of southern Africa. Despite American public protest, the Reagan Administration has not discontinued its support for the apartheid regime; on the contrary, it seeks to perpetuate this regime.

"The future of a free and democratic South Africa," Alfred Nzo said in conclusion, "was defined in the charter of liberty, the ANC's programme document adopted in 1955. South Africa must become a non-racial, united democratic state. Its government must enjoy the support of the entire population, and not just one separate category. All the republic's citizens will be able to participate in government. Our wealth will belong to the nation while the land will belong to those who till it. Internationally, a democratic South Africa will energetically contribute to the solution of the problems of the region and the continent, as well as to the work of the Organization of African Unity and the non-aligned movement; it will also do all it can to deliver the earth from the threat of nuclear destruction."

Lusaka

Black miners are in the van of the anti-apartheid movement.

AP-TASS photo

"I Was Hijacked in Rome"

Late last year we laid bare the "mystery of the Negev Desert," where Israel is developing nuclear weapons with the effective complicity of NATO countries (No. 44, 1986). Israeli technician Mordechai Vanunu, who had worked at Israel's Dimona nuclear research centre for 10 years, provided the international public with fresh evidence of Israel's efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Vanunu had left Israel, was planning a book about what he had seen at Dimona and had already given the British Sunday Times information about the centre. The Sunday Times published the sensational story on October 5, 1986, and some time later, Le Matin of Paris reported that Mordechai Vanunu had been abducted by the Israeli secret service in London, and faced a 15-year prison term.

The latest evidence to come to light since then points to a secret conspiracy by Western special services under the pretext of opposing international terrorism, and attempts to conceal Tel Aviv's dangerous plans.

On December 21, 1986, foreign journalists accredited to Israel, together with their Israeli colleagues, gathered before the district court in Jerusalem, to which Mordechai Vanunu was to be brought for a "closed session." Three weeks earlier, on November 28, the Jerusalem district court had charged the technician from Dimona with treason and spying: these offences are punishable with death rather than the 15-year prison term reported by Le Matin.

When the police car carrying Vanunu under heavy guard appeared, journalists rushed towards it—and suddenly Vanunu, still inside, pressed his left palm against the window: what was written there was visible to all: I, M. Vanunu, was hijacked in Rome, Italy, 30.09.86. BA 504, 21.00."

It was not difficult to "decode" the figures on Vanunu's palm: he had been abducted in Rome on September 30, after flying in on British Airways flight 504. The plane arrived in Rome from London at 18.38 and at 21.00 Vanunu was kidnapped.

The abductors did their best to cover their tracks. According to an Italian newspaper, the list of passengers on board flight 504 on September 30 was missing from Leonardo Da Vinci Airport. This raised the question as to whether Vanunu was among them. In early November British officials, denying reports about the abduction of Vanunu from London, stated flatly that no one of that name had left Britain "in the usual way," that is, through official checkpoints. In other words, the British authorities do not know or wish to know anything about the "case of Mordechai Vanunu" and assert that conjectures about the "cooperation" of the British secret service in the abduction are completely groundless.

Spokesmen for Scotland Yard and the Foreign Office have been thus caught lying. When the words Vanunu had written on his palm were made public knowledge, a scandal broke out with British Airways at the centre. The managers of the airline, evidently unwilling to take the blame, told the Italian authorities, who had started an investigation, that Vanunu really had bought a ticket, passed through registration and left London on flight 504 on September 30.

The reporters did not rest there. They eventually learned that Mossad agents had brought the abducted Vanunu via Paris to Israel on October 2, using an El-Al flight for the purpose. In this way France, along with Britain and Italy, became involved in the operations of the Israeli intelligence service. This shows once again that Mossad agents are at home in Western Europe and can do what they like with the knowledge of the intelligence services of the NATO countries.

Tel Aviv was silent in the days immediately following the "mysterious disappearance" of Mordechai Vanunu. Yet the public in the West European countries, especially Britain, continued to blame the abduction of the "dangerous witness" on Mossad. Newspapers reported that, planning its act of state terrorism, Tel Aviv had asked London "not to interfere." Demands for an investigation into the report were made with growing insistence in the British Parliament. The evidence suggests that the conclusion was then drawn that, if Mossad could not clear itself of the charge of abducting Vanunu, at least its West European backers and fellow-conspirators would have to be protected.

In early November, Tel Aviv suddenly admitted that Vanunu really had been abducted and was in detention in Israel. A campaign was launched to slander and smear Vanunu and simultaneously present him as "a supporter of terrorists," a "Communist," a "greedy spy," who had "sold" Israel's military secrets to ... the Soviet Union (with the generous cooperation of the Sunday Times).

The paper Yedioth Aharonoth, for instance, carried an old photograph of Vanunu taking part in a demonstration in support of the establishment of a Palestinian state and carrying a poster with the legend: "Israel and Palestine: two countries for two nations." The Ha'aretz reported that Vanunu had once said: "We should stop oppressing the Arabs," and had led a student group linked with the Communist Party and the leftist party MAPAM. It also said Vanunu once headed a student campaign in support of a professor who had refused to do military service in Lebanon during the Israeli occupation.

Reports appeared to the effect that Vanunu had intended to join the Communist Party and that the pictures he took at Dimona "had perhaps ended up in the hands of the Soviet Union."

A dispatch from Jerusalem sent by a correspondent of the U.S. newspaper Newsday is symptomatic. According to him, "Vanunu is being closely questioned about whether he gave any of the 60 photographs he provided the Sunday Times to Communists. The Sunday Times published only a few of the pictures. All of the photos could perhaps provide valuable information to the Soviets, officials said." Finally, came an utterly cynical statement: "It was important to have him back to learn

everything from him. Otherwise we could have had him shot dead anywhere in the street."

The whole campaign of lies, slander and misinformation is being conducted for the sole purpose of shielding Tel Aviv, which has again been caught out in an act of state terrorism perpetrated with unprecedented arrogance on the international scene. What is more, an international scandal is gathering momentum at a time when Washington, London and Tel Aviv are doing their utmost to present themselves as organizers of an international battle against terrorism. What Tel Aviv is trying to do in the "case of Mordechai Vanunu" today is to distract attention from the scandal, close it and eventually inter-

Outwitting his jailers, Vanunu shows newsmen his palm on which he has written where and when he was kidnapped.

From L'Espresso (Italy)

pret everything through the usual perspective of anti-communism and anti-Sovietism.

The "case" has exposed not only the nuclear ambitions of Israel and the complicity of the Western powers in the development of its nuclear arsenal, but also the hypocrisy of Washington, London and Tel Aviv in their approach to the problem of international terrorism. The case "ruined" their game at a time when, following a clearly prearranged and preconcerted scenario, the three countries had begun to whip up a malicious anti-Syrian campaign, charging Damascus with supporting international terrorism. There is no need to return to that major act of provocation: it has been covered in sufficient detail already and ended in failure.

Syrian President Hafez Assad, delivering a speech at the height of the London-led anti-Syrian campaign, said: "A few days ago the Israeli secret service abducted an Israeli nuclear specialist, Mordechai Vanunu, from the heart of the British capital of London and brought him to Israel after his disclosure of secrets pertaining to the Israeli nuclear industry." The Syrian President made his statement even before details of Vanunu's "mysterious disappearance" were public knowledge. "Yet the Thatcher government did not give the alarm to the world. It did not say even a word of protest to denounce terrorism and protect the sovereignty of Britain and her violated laws."

The Syrian President also noted that the Israeli secret service already had "experience" of operations in Britain: "In 1984 the Israeli secret service attempted to abduct from the heart of London a former Nigerian minister, using three agents for the purpose. They led him out of his home in broad daylight, drugged him and packed him in a wooden crate marked 'diplomatic.' The case was exposed but, nevertheless, hushed up. The Thatcher government did not make any statement to Israel or exhibit any concern about terrorism and the insult to human dignity on British territory, in the capital of the country." His conclusion was: "Those who are carrying the tattered banner of 'the fight against terrorism' today, protecting Israel, are deliberately ignoring the fact that Israel itself has sown the seeds of mass and individual terror in the Middle East."

On New Year's eve, the Beirut newspaper Al-Anwar reported that the number of Western journalists, predominantly Americans, had begun to grow rapidly in the Lebanese capital. The rumour was that important events could be expected in Lebanon and the Middle East as a whole early in 1987. Quoting Western journalists, Al-Anwar said that a number of senior officials of the U.S. Administration had offered to provoke a problem that would distract American attention from the scandal over arms supplies to Iran and the diversion of funds to the Nicaraguan contras. The newspaper described some of the "proposals" being studied in that context, such as the killings of a number of Israeli officials in Europe by the CIA and Mossad, with responsibility laid at the door of Syria and the Palestinians linked with it. This charge, the newspaper wrote, was to provide a pretext for a strike at Syrian troops in Lebanon and at Palestinian camps.

What we have here therefore is another action on the part of the CIA and Mossad, another coordinated operation by the secret service of the Zionist state and NATO countries, and the scene again is Western Europe. The target of that act of provocation remains the same, Syria and the Palestinians.

It should be recalled in this context that the large-scale Israeli act of aggression against Lebanon, which is still in progress, started with an attempt on the life of the Israeli ambassador to London in the summer of 1982. The attempt and its "aftermath" had been predicted several months in advance by the Israeli mass media. Now new acts of provocation are in the pipeline. Moreover, as events were to show there was complete collaboration between the special services of London and Tel Aviv.

For this reason reports that have appeared in British newspapers are entirely plausible. They said that a fortnight before the kidnapping, Shimon Peres, the then Israeli Prime Minister, personally warned Margaret Thatcher that Mossad planned to carry out this operation and asked for British intelligence not to interfere. Though Thatcher's reply remains secret, British MPs called on the government to say straight out whether it really did have any contacts with the Israelis before Vanunu's disappearance. The Foreign Office vigorously denied having done so. Earlier the Foreign Office and Scotland Yard had denied that Vanunu departed from Britain aboard British Airways flight 504, but were found out! Also deserving of note is Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Shamir's reply to the hypocritical request from the British authorities to communicate the details of the Israelis' abduction of the former nuclear physicist, who disappeared in London on September 30.

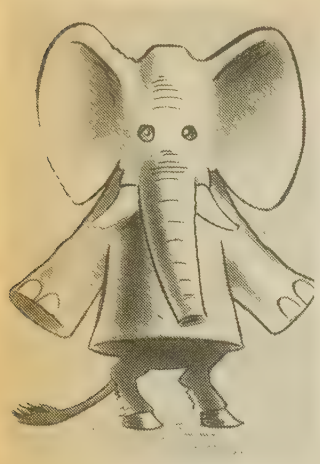
"I believe the British are well aware that Israel did not break British law," Itzhak Shamir significantly declared.

Tel Aviv was just as brazen with regard to the Italian authorities, whom Prime Minister Bettino Craxi had asked to initiate an inquiry. The first answer to the Italian request was "no comment." Then Tel Aviv advised the Italians to "disregard" Vanunu's claim that he had been abducted in Rome.

Now we know what London and Rome said. But what does Paris say? After all, Vanunu, having been kidnapped in Rome, was then smuggled into the French capital, from which point he was shipped to Israel. How? Who helped the kidnappers? Who abetted them in France? All French airports enforce stringent countermeasures against international terrorism. But now suddenly Israeli terrorists bundle their victim through the French capital with ease!

It is too early to write off the "Vanunu affair." A court in Jerusalem is secretly suppressing a dangerous witness to the Zionist state's creation of the "doomsday weapon" which, in the hands of fanatics who have made state terrorism their policy, could detonate a global catastrophe. It was necessary to do away with this dangerous witness. This has been done, and done with the aid of those quarters that placed nuclear weapons in the possession of Tel Aviv.

Evgeny KORSHUNOV



Demopublicans

Our New York correspondent ponders on a letter he received from the President

What worried the U.S. President most in 1986? I thought I knew for sure. And not from hearsay but from a personal letter from the President I received at the time of the mid-term elections to the U.S. Congress.

A widespread form of drumming up trade in America is to buy mailing lists and use them to circulate advertizing matter to prospective customers. That is how my address came to be "sold" by the publishers of a conservative bulletin delivered to our New York bureau. The "buyer" was none other than the Republican National Committee.

"Dear Friend," the letter read. "During my second term in office as your President I may never have a more important reason to write you than I have now... If the Democrats retake the Senate they will control the entire United States Congress. Then they could use their power to prevent us from carrying out our foreign, defence and economic policies.

"Winning the 1986 [mid-term—**A.A.**] elections poses the toughest challenge our Party has faced since we won the White House and Senate in 1980." That was quintessence of the message this writer happened to receive by a fluke.

Judging by the results of the November elections, Reagan's apprehensions were well-founded. The alignment of forces in the bicameral Congress changed in favour of the Democrats. Has there, then, appeared a Democratic alternative? Will the President find himself in difficulties?

The tone of his present speeches, however, is in sharp contrast to the panicky notes he struck only a few months ago when he was mustering electoral support. Regardless of the election outcome, the Administration's policy will not change—this is the keynote of his current public pronouncements.

Walden Bello of the Institute for Policy Studies explains the President's confidence by the voting record in the House of Representatives. In 1985 alone the Democratic-controlled House

—approved the allocation of $27 million to the Nicaraguan contras in "humanitarian" assistance (and $100 million in arms deliveries);

—lifted the ban on police aid to El Salvador and Honduras;

—repealed the Clark amendment banning U.S. military aid to bands seeking to overthrow the government of Angola;

—voted $15 million in "humanitarian aid" for Afghan counterrevolutionaries who, as it is, are generously subsidized by the CIA through secret channels;

—provided $5 million to anti-government groups in Kampuchea.

"In the current campaign of anti-communism sweeping Congress," Bello concludes, "it is the Democrats—not the Republicans—who are leading the troops."

"Holier Than Reagan"

That is precisely what many leaders of the Democratic Party are trying to be, in the opinion of Jim Leach, a Republican Congressman from Iowa. The vacillation and confusion in the Democratic ranks are understandable. Twice in the recent period they failed not only to regain the presidency, but even to offer any serious competition to the Republicans in the struggle for the country's most prestigious post. After the crushing defeat in 1984 (Democratic candidate Walter Mondale won a majority only in one state and in the District of Columbia), influential forces in the party cast about for way of "winning back the voter." However, prompted by their narrow class philosophy, they saw the solution in finding a "democratic Reagan." The right-centrists among the Democrats, whose voice is most loudly heard today, proceed from the assumption that America "has shifted to the right."

This is true enough as far as government policy under President Reagan is concerned. Regressive tax legislation has been introduced, many social programmes have been scuttled, and the White House makes no secret of its intention to continue this policy. The view that the federal authorities are obliged to provide at least minimal guarantees of the rights of national minorities and the victims of social and economic discrimination has been discarded, both in theory and in practice. The dollars slashed from these programmes have been spent on the arms buildup.

As regards the American public, the "swing-to-the-right" thesis is questionable, to say the least. In 1978, Harris opinion polls established that only 45 per cent of the public agreed that programmes helping women and minorities in employment and education were necessary in order to prevent past discrimination against these groups in jobs and education being continued in the future. It took only two years of the Reagan presidency to bring the number of supporters of such programmes to 57 per cent, and by the end of 1985 as many as 71 per cent saw them as an urgent necessity.

Opinion polls sponsored by the ABC television network and the Washington Post also showed that the dynamics of the change in public opinion was in inverse proportion to the length of time Reagan's programmes had been in effect. Between 1981 and late 1983 the percentage of those who believed that part of the money channelled to military spending should be used to increase allocations for the poorest sections rose from 49 to 67, for education, from 43 to 75, and for health programmes, from 49 to 66 per cent.

These facts are known to the Democratic policy makers, as are the results of opinion polls among those who voted for Reagan in the last election: only 5 per cent said they had voted for him because they shared his views; the rest were carried away by his personality. Nor is it a secret that the degree of approval of the President's actions directly depends on the phase of the economic cycle, which the White House cannot control. Nevertheless, the Democrats' efforts to be "holier than Reagan" have not escaped the notice even of laymen. What are they after?

Repackaged Programmes

One of the dubious records set by the Republican Administration in its six years at the helm is, unquestionably, the present degree of polarization of society. If the total income of all American families is visualized as a huge pie, the biggest slice—43 per cent—is consumed by the top one fifth of the population (with incomes of more than $48,000 a year). An equal number of families at the lower rungs of society get 4.7 per cent of the pie. The slice consumed by the "middle classes" has shrunk, as compared with the late 1970s, from 46 to 39 per cent. This is the crucial thing. In the context of the accelerated vertical differentiation of society, the populist slogans with which the Democrats have wooed the masses have lost their appeal even for those sections of the bourgeoisie whose interests the party has traditionally served. The sharpening struggle between the various groups of industrial and finance capital to lay their hands on the levers of governmental power calls for something else. The common class interests of the bourgeoisie must stand out in bolder relief on the party standard. Moreover, American elections have long been called a "race of the moneybags," hence the slogans should attract and not repel those from whom liberal donations to the party's campaign chest can be expected. And so the Democrats are having to stop juggling with words and get down to basics. This was aptly depicted by the American artist Robert Grossman who combined the Republican elephant and the Democratic donkey in a single symbol.

The Democrats, Fortune magazine says, are seeking to appeal to the "well-satisfied" section of the population "by endorsing a sturdy national defence and a restrained fiscal policy... They talk less than they used to about equity and redistribution of wealth." The fact that sections on social programmes and creation of new jobs were deleted from the draft party platform published in September under the title "New alternatives in a changing America" is indicative.

But perhaps nothing bears out the press characterization of these "alternatives"—as "a repackaging of the Reagan Administration's programmes"—better than the Democrat's defence and foreign policy concepts. "Deterrence—the threat that a nuclear attack by one nation will end in the devastation of the attacker—has enforced an uneasy but durable truce between our countries [the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.—**A.A.**]. It is a doctrine that has worked and one we dare not renounce in favour of some untried method for keeping the peace." The logic of this most explosive age clearly demonstrates that the basic "method" of safeguarding mankind is disarmament. However, the above contention is not just another argument advanced by Reagan Administration spokesman to justify rejection of the Soviet peace proposals. I heard it from a potential President of the United States, Charles S. Robb, chairman of the recently established Democratic Leadership Council, which has become the main generator of right-centrist ideas inside the Democratic Party.

What is actually happening?

Authoritative opinion polls show that 96 per cent of Americans believe that "picking a fight with the Soviet Union is too dangerous in a nuclear world." Eighty-four per cent of Americans feel they are being deceived when told that the production of new types of weapons is necessary to pressure the Russians during disarmament talks, and they are opposed to this. The Democrats in their "alternatives" stand for weapons systems such as Midgetman missiles, Trident submarines with D-5 missiles and Stealth bombers, described as "second strike" systems, possession of which, it is said, would make for stable relations between the "nuclear superpowers." This "second strike" thesis is for public consumption. Those who batten on profits from the production of these weapons know very well that they are well adapted for first-strike use.

The Democratic platform does differ in some respects from that of the Republican President: the Democrats' objections to the scrapping of SALT-2 and to the revision of the ABM treaty remain, as does the call for a ban on nuclear testing. But are these objections not designed to lull the public and those in the party who are resisting complete surrender to Reaganism? The hard facts show that the Democratic leadership has done nothing to check the present Administration's disastrous policy of whipping up the arms race and its inevitable consequence—heightened international tension.

Thus, that has indeed been a shift to the right. Not in American society, but in the ruling top crust, including the Democratic Party.

The present White House incumbent was for a long time dubbed the "teflon President." Because nothing stuck to Reagan: neither the unsavoury doings of members of his cabinet, nor such unspeakable escapades as his paying homage to the graves of SS-men in Bitburg. Today the teflon is somewhat the worse for wear. Rejection of the offer in Reykjavik of a secure peace and the "Irangate" scandal have disillusioned millions of Americans as regards the supposed infallibility of the Chief Executive. Will this change in public feeling affect the pace of the Democrats' drive to keep up with Reagan, and if not, how will it all end?

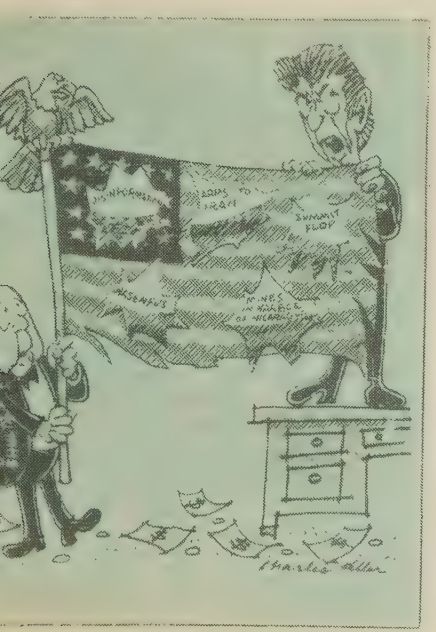
Will those who sincerely believed in the possibility of a Democratic alternative agree with the elimination of the last distinction between the two main parties? In 1988, when the next presidential elections will be held, revisionist Democrats, the Atlantic Monthly predicts, "will be abandoned by the voters in even greater numbers."

Andrei ARKHIPOV

New York—Moscow

President Reagan to White House spokesman Larry Speakes: "Quick, Larry, some red, white and blue patches!"

From People's Daily World (U.S.A.)



The Roses of the Sahara

Soviet writer Valery Povolyaev is currently completing a collection of essays on Oriental and African countries. Below we print an excerpt from the book, in which he describes a visit to Libya, where he met Bulgarian geologists. They showed him the unique natural phenomenon known as the "desert roses."

Meanwhile the sandstorm known locally as "qibli" had swirled and churned the desert even more. The skies swelled menacingly and cadaverous blotches appeared, each with its deep-seated fish-eye rotating freneticall-y, watching everything on the ground, spitting sand and forcing automobiles to halt. The driver has no choice but to stop when a steep sand drift rises before the radiator. Encountering it, the automobile bucks like a mare, seems to kick out and, if it has been moving any faster than a tortoise, turns head over heels and slithers upside down along the sand. Not unnaturally, passengers feel uncomfortable—who wants to drive upside down? The wind whines, hoots threateningly and mockingly like an owl and tries to knock down whoever happens to be around so that his head is buried in the sand. However, not everyone succumbs, for man, tiny as he is, is as stubborn as an ant and makes his way through the sandstorm towards his dwelling. Automobiles also follow one another without stopping, for in the desert it is all road and not like an asphalt road where there is no turn-off. Heaven knows when the sandstorm will end.

Indeed, the qibli has neither beginning nor end. Again we drive into the sands. Once is interesting, twice is diverting, three times a little too much, four times sickening, five nauseating, six, well, the sixth time, one no longer has the energy to drive into the desert, the seventh is worse still. But why these trite deliberations when the end is at hand? How many times have we driven into the sands? Eight, nine, eleven, perhaps thirteen?

The sands try to suffocate us, choke us.

Indeed, nothing can be sadder than the human being who has been crushed by circumstances, life, the road, the wind, the sand: there is a ringing in the ears, the heart aches when you look at him and the day pales. It is essential for the human being to relax and stay cheerful, for only then will he come through, only then will he live a long life. But the crushed human being does not live long, alas; oppression flattens him, bends him to the ground and eventually forces him into the ground.

Only the emancipated, liberty-loving, joyous human being lives.

However, this aside is also supererogatory, like the extra card in black jack. Everyone understands what kind of man lives and what kind merely drags along, who can make a century and who is not destined to last even half as long.

So how many times before had we driven into the sands? Today we were to visit a plantation of desert roses, also known as the flowers of the desert or sand roses. But first we had to find Georgi Todorov and his landrover. He was our guide.

Desert roses are flowers of a very special kind. They are of stone, artfully, subtly, elegantly, moulded by nature. The petals are frail and one is afraid even to breathe on them, let alone brush them with one's fingers. God forbid that they should disintegrate and drop into the sand grain by grain. They are the world's oldest roses, as each blossom is 90, 100 or 120 years old, if not more.

So what is a plantation of sand roses like? We had heard much about them but none of us had ever seen one. I only know how sand roses grow, how they break through the sand and blossom; I only know the process and its chemistry. But I have never seen a "live" plantation, never touched the sand with my fingers. Suppose it is something special? Nor have I ever inhaled the air of the roses of the Sahara, for after all it is quite possible that the air too is of a special kind!

To cut a long story short, we found the landrover belonging to Georgi Todorov, a Bulgarian engineer who is one of Runev's drilling deputies. His derricks are not far away. In the morning, when the qibli was blowing a little quieter, Todorov had visited the plantation, driven round it in figures of eight, so that it could be located in the blurr of sand, and headed towards us. With him in his landrover was his wife Tanya, also an engineer, and his son, Igor. This nice little boy in shorts held up with one button is also going to be a drilling engineer: he said as much, picking his nose. For he has taken a fancy to his father's job. Again he stuck his finger meditatively up his nose and screwing his eyes up like an adult, probed the swirling space with a glance. He likes Africa, is used to sandstorms, takes the heat in his stride, and is able to switch on the auto conditioner, and lift and lower the window. Chatting with us, he did it twice. What else does a future engineer need?

To be in the Sahara and not have seen a plantation of the famous stone roses? How come? No, the Bulgarian comrades will not let us go without having done so.

Todorov's landrover went on ahead into the sand and we followed. The sandstorm seemed to have intensified, with the sand bouncing off the ground as off a red-hot frying pan. Howling, it shot up, spattering painfully into one's eyes, which it hit when we alighted, ripping off our goggles and lashing out at us mercilessly.

Sometimes the automobiles dissolved in the sand and then we crawled tortoise-like through the blur, blindly feeling our way out now in one direction, now in another, as not even the tip of one's own nose could be seen. Eventually the moment came when we lost one another and had to stop. Then came a lull, and we spotted one automobile some 50 yards away and then the other, nearby, and again clustered together, following in the wake of Todorov's landrover.

The plantation is a bare patch, completely unmarked. Of course, the roses cannot be seen; the flowers are buried in the sand and only here and there gypsum scum bleeds through, white on rusty red. The roses grow during rainfalls, when water seeps down through the sand, finding its way to the subterranean gypsum layer. In turn, the latter exudes a paste gluing the grains of sand together. When the lump is exposed, it is assailed by the wind, which stretches and moulds a petal and pulls it to one side. Then the direction of the wind changes and a second petal is pulled out. The rose grows slowly, very slowly; for just one leaf to appear it takes at least 50 years, if not more, for everything depends on how often it rains, and on the size of the gypsum layer. As for the wind, it is always there, more than is ever needed.

Sahara is a land not only of sand, but also of wind, and sun, with its diabolically scorching heat. We circled for 40 minutes or so in the blur of the sandstorm, as Todorov was simply unable to identify the plantation. It seemed to have vanished into the sand; it had been, and was no more.

Finally, Todorov ran out of patience, stopped his landrover, walked up to us and gave an eloquent shrug. "Let's have a rest," he suggested.

"You mean to say the field of daisies has disappeared?" Runev sympathetically inquired.

"Well, I was there in the morning, and did figures of eight, in short everything, so as to be able to spot it right away, but there you are," Todorov shrugged again. However, some 20 minutes later we discovered the plantation.

There were no outward signs at all: even the gypsum whiteness had disappeared into the sand. The only difference was that the sand here seemed more compact than elsewhere, and some hardened patches could be discerned amidst the humps. The stone roses are in these patches. The depth at which they grow is not great, only a few fingers down, at most a full hand. The roses are frail and exquisite, and one has to take care uncovering them. The flowers differ: some are small with slender, needle-like petals and sharp prickly stone ridges, others are large, heavyish, old, having accumulated weight and beauty over the decades. But young and ripe alike cannot be plucked. Every day customs officers catch transgressors, confiscate the roses and place them in glass showcases, amidst the advertised wares in the expensive souvenir stalls at the airport. Consequently, we were only able to look at the roses, and, having looked our fill, photograph them, and cover them again with sand.

Meanwhile the heart rebelled. How could one, after taking so much trouble to find them, gulping mouthfuls of sand, sweating profusely and suffering privation, and having at last found the marvel and touched it, go back with nothing? Was it really fair? Not even a tiny flower, the tiniest, the reddest, growing over there, away from the shrub?

Oh, that plunge back into childhood! In each of us what has been before is invariably reborn. For in each of us the past is firmly rooted and each of us can see himself as a barefoot, happy little fellow striving to catch the sun with his lips, and bite off a chunk, as if from a head of cheese, catch the biggest fish in the river, ride the swiftest horse, get the loveliest girl to smile and—so what!—scornfully pass by, learn to drive a car and, in general, do everything to make onlookers glow with admiration. Dreams these are, childhood dreams that accompany the adult to the end, to the finishing line; and even there they provoke a smile of regret, for you, my friend, did not accomplish everything you wanted to... You did not catch the biggest fish, did not bite a piece out of the sun, did not become a hero.

The stone rose would be an adornment in any home. It would be nice to place it on a bookshelf, open to view, amazing visitors, so romantic is it, even mysterious. It would be nice to say: my dear friends, look at this stone rose from the Sahara! But no, that is not for us. It must not be. The wind, as if in compassion, died down and the sand drifted rustling from the sky above.

The qibli gave us a few minutes of respite. The rustling of the sand was grave-like, evoking unpleasant sensations. One felt sad. Could these exotic roses, indeed, the entire plantation, be tombs?

Everything is possible, even that.

Tourists readily purchase these bizarre sandstone shapes looking like fantastic flowers. Photo by A. Morkovkin (TASS)

The colour of the roses, like their shape and size, also differs. Some are a tender pastel tint and are joyous, others are the pink of the morning sun, still others are purple, seeming to have imbibed gunpowder smoke; some are vivid, bloody, juicy, others are lilac, and still others, brown. For each patch uncovered has its own colour, its own tinge.

Many marvels are to be met with in the world. I too have encountered many, but this was the first time I had seen a plantation of sand roses. Am I destined ever to see them again? They exist in Libya, but are they to be found in Chad, Niger, or Mali?

We decided to have a rest and, excuse me, sneeze away the sand on a visit to the Bulgarians. Some 20 kilometres or so from the plantation is the Bulgarian oil company's expedition working the Murzuk deposits.

We washed and sat down at a low occasional table to sip a cup of acridly bitter coffee. Expedition chief Marin Ivanov began to talk about his job: he looked as if he was bursting to do so, and no doubt he needed to.

The Murzuk deposit is not much to talk about. But it has to be developed as the ball has been started rolling. Seventeen wells have been drilled, rather shallow, going down to an average depth of two and a half thousand metres, no more. Fifteen of the seventeen have already been put to the test, that is, made ready to yield oil, after which they are stopped up and handed over to the superviser, much like the keys to a new block of flats.

The superviser is a middleman, or, rather, a state-hired receiver who knows everything there is to know about the expedition. The Bulgarians do the job, supplying everything they need—tubing, machinery, fuel—at their own expense, bringing it all in by sea, air and land. Libya compensates by supplying them with oil from the wells sunk. In principle, this is advantageous for Libya, because it does not have to make any outlay. Nor does it have to pay hard cash for the work accepted. It shares what is found. Bulgaria also finds this profitable. As a rule, the two sides part well pleased with each other.

Each of the tested wells yields very little oil, slighty over 200 litres an hour. However, the Murzuk oil is fine and can fuel automobiles. True, Marin himself is not very happy; his face is drawn and wrinkled with anxiety and his eyes are also worried, and all because the Murzuk deposit is so low-yielding. But after all, it is not Marin Ivanov who is to blame!

Not only the Bulgarians, but also Soviet geologists are drilling in the desert in search of oil. But prospecting is prospecting, and both Bulgarian and Soviet geologists sometimes run into completely empty, not to mention half-empty, wells. They are programmed in advance; there is even a special hit-and-miss factor, for after all not all wells can be expected to gush! Marin Ivanov has no reason to be unhappy.

Our half-hour respite is over. The half hour flashed by. Time has a fascinating quality: at one moment it gathers momentum, becoming blindingly swift, at another it drags, and nobody can cope with it. That's how it is. ■

Contradictions of an Artistic Career

Andrei Tarkovsky: In Memoriam

It takes time to understand an art so complex and acutely contradictory, yet fundamentally integral as that of Andrei Tarkovsky. His diaries and correspondence, as well as the versions of the scripts that he produced and did not produce have to be studied. But what is needed most is a comprehensive, unbiassed, thorough study of the pictures he directed.

An artist's relationship with the environment in which he works is a problem that requires the closest attention. The artist has a responsibility to the milieu that has nursed his talent. However, he is also entitled to expect that the new word "about time and oneself," which he contributes to art, will be understood or at least that an attempt will be made to understand him, and he will not be asked to do what is alien to his talent. In Tarkovsky's case this reciprocal understanding was violated. This made those who loved and highly appraised his work as a director seek to shield him from all criticism. In such conditions it is hard for an artist to grow, to make his way in life and towards the minds and hearts of his contemporaries. In such conditions the talent may break, lose its bearings, and start either to conform to or to sidestep life.

This evokes a bitterness that is all the greater in that interest in Tarkovsky's work has in effect never faded: it was especially manifest last year, when all the films he made at home were billed by Moscow cinemas. They showed "Andrei Rublev," "Mirror," "Stalker," "Solaris," and "Ivan's Childhood." Tarkovsky spent the evening of his life far from us. Abroad he produced two pictures, one in Italy, the other, later, in Sweden. He also published in several languages a book of reflections on the aesthetics of the film image on which he had been working while still here in Moscow. Without breaking with his country, either in the political or civic sense, he nevertheless ceased to live at one with our daily life, our pain, our joy, our hopes.

Time will answer in full the painful questions that inevitably arise in connection with this final chapter of Tarkovsky's life. It will analyze the logic behind the behaviour of those who raised bureaucratic obstacles instead of helping the artist. It will reveal the origins of Tarkovsky's own mistakes in seeking a way out of the difficulties where there was no way out. And could not be.

It is no wonder Tarkovsky himself for many years saw detachment from the soil that had nurtured both his "Andrei Rublev" and his "Ivan," and furnished the vital juices and strength for his own talent, as inconceivable and ruinous.

When the storm clouds over his "Andrei Rublev" were particularly dark, he wrote to me: "The only thing I want is that my work is applied—solely and sincerely—to serving Russia. It may sound bombastic, but that is not the point. I do not divorce myself from the people, and hence I have no reason to seek formulas. I think I have never talked with anyone in such a tone. Evidently because I was sure nobody would understand. By virtue of hypocrisy, by virtue of the fact that this notion of serving Russia has not for a long time been taken seriously. But I am telling you this. For that reason I cannot and do not wish to do anything I would see as a treachery. I find it rather awkward to say this, but I think you will be unprejudiced and understand me."

Having known Tarkovsky for many years, I can say that he lived and felt as he wrote in that letter of his. All his roots were in Russia, and he was proud and excited to realize it. He was all the more bitterly perplexed when attempts were made to read into his pictures what was not really there. Indeed, he did not want to and did not know how to make rosy-cheeked inconsequential films that would crackle pleasantly on the teeth of a relaxed audience. He believed his country needed an art of high, bold truth. He steadfastly resisted attempts to "edit" his scripts and films, to diminish and enfeeble their ardent and concerned reflections on his country's difficult destiny. Its truly lofty destiny! He sought to perceive it in all its grandeur in "Ivan's Childhood," "Andrei Rublev" and "Mirror."

The deep-seated and radical changes in our artistic life and in the lot of artists came at a time when Tarkovsky was already condemned to struggle against a fearful, debilitating disease. Did he, tormented by his suffering, have the strength to understand that the times when the bureaucrat edited the artist had receded into the past in his native country? Had he now come home, nothing would have prevented him from telling his audience what they shared, not on the surface, but deep down, what he believed in as much as they do, and ardently sought to assert in his films.

I do not know if he was ever told that all his films were now being rerun for the widest of cinema audiences.

If he was told, could he, crushed by his illness, retain the clear vision to appreciate it, to draw the conclusions that his many friends so firmly expected of him? That is something I do not know. On the other hand, I do know quite for certain that had he now returned home there would have been no obstacles in his way to the audience, to the people.

Unfortunately, for him all this came too late. He had neither the strength nor the time to be again what he had been.

It is this that I regard as the tragic outcome of his life: time came forward to meet him, but he no longer had the strength to identify himself with this new time.

Death is always the turning point after which all that is inauthentic, transient, temporary in an artist's life recedes into nothingness, to beyond the line. There comes a time when his place in the art of his country, among his teachers and predecessors, and among those of his own generation and successors, eventually begins to be seen in all its definitive fullness, free of tendentious distortion or sickening sentimentality. Tarkovsky's work was at once integral and deeply contradictory. Different tendencies battled within it. As the years passed, it grew more introspective, but more cameral, concentrating primarily on those inner

problems that agitated his mind. I do not mean to say that that is bad. The artist always talks about himself, he unravels in his every creation what the Soviet writer Leonid Leonov has termed the same spiritual knots. I simply think that in Tarkovsky's early pictures introspection never obscured the vast passion-torn world, but in "Stalker" the world and history seem nonexistent. It has but one dimension, the dimension of the artist's own heart and soul.

The sources that nourished Tarkovsky's talent, if what is meant are his purely artistic leanings, were diverse. He loved Thomas Mann, even dreamed of adapting for the screen his novel "Joseph and His Brothers"; he loved old Japanese poetry, Hermann Hesse, the cinema of Robert Bresson, the painting of Bosch, the music of Bach and Vivaldi. His deepest roots were in Russian art, in the austere, fervent tragedy of those great icon-painters Rublev and Theophanes the Greek, in the ethical quests and artistic discoveries of Leo Tolstoy, in Pushkin and Tyutchev and, of course, in Dostoyevsky. It is no wonder that he cherished for a long time the idea of adapting "The Idiot" for the screen.

That he was not allowed to do so was damaging not only for Tarkovsky's own work, but also for us filmgoers. After all, he did not want a conventional adaptation, but saw it as an opportunity to enter into a creative dialogue with Dostoyevsky, carried on as it were from the very depths of our time, in the light of man's conflicting and painful experience in this second half of the 20th century.

He told me once that he would call his film "The Passions of Prince Myshkin"—as he had originally entitled his "Andrei Rublev" "The Passions of Andrei."

The mysterious as well as the tragic were always inherent in Tarkovsky's art. He was not interested in understanding the human being in his daily life and trials. He sought to place man face to face with history, to confront him with those moral values which are of sempiternal and not transient significance. Among these he always listed man's links with the spiritual experience of his ancestors, with the land where he grew and to which he was to return, however far his own fate might take him.

Tarkovsky's "Solaris" is about that. The same theme, now poeticized and distilled by the director's own personal experience, is to be discerned in "Mirror." The past is resuscitated in "Mirror," in "Solaris," in "Andrei Rublev" and in "Ivan's Childhood" as inseverably linked with the present. Even more, in Tarkovsky's mind, the past and present are the extremes from which he constructs the spiritual life of his protagonists. History is passed through them to illumine their real substance, to reveal man's ability to resist evil, blood, untruth, and to assert his right to lead a truthful life, the original image of which is to be found in his heart, that same original image that is an amalgam of all the genuine values that mankind has learned from the trials it has lived through.

This concept is expressed most deeply in "Andrei Rublev," which I see as being of crucial significance in understanding Tarkovsky's oeuvre. It tells the story of an artist in a setting of contradictions, each of them formidable enough to demolish even a personality invested with exceptional spiritual power. However, in Rublev's creations, his spiritual power is transmuted into images full of wise and elevated harmony. As far as I know, during a brief remission from his illness, Tarkovsky announced that he planned to make a film about the temptations of St. Anthony. The film "Andrei Rublev" is also one of the temptations that assailed the artist on his path which lay through the age's worst tempests. That the man who visited this world in its hour of destiny was blessed was something that Tarkovsky believed as fervently as the poet who wrote those lines, lines that could have served as an epigraph to "Andrei Rublev," to the story of an artist compelled to go barefoot over his country's burning soil, who was able to transmute into art what he had experienced, and gain for himself and give to others the beauty that, as Dostoyevsky and Tarkovsky alike believed, would save the world.

The tragic trials that befell people in the 20th century brought to the fore many artists who made the global disbelief in the power of the human being the leitmotif of their films, novels and plays, expressing doubt as to man's ability, as Hamlet would have said, to put right an age that is out of joint, to rejoin the thread of time broken by nazism, by the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Tarkovsky was never attracted to their refined, at times brilliantly artistic, scepticism. For him their total negation of everything was always alien.

He began with a film about a boy whose heart was scarred by war. About a boy who had to kill and wreak vengeance, living day after day under the Damoclean sword of death. In his "Ivan's Childhood," he analyzes, with a fearlessness that is always synonymous with real art, all the deformations that this historic situation of tragic significance introduced into a child's moral world. Having taken Ivan through his ordained Calvary, he has induced us not to be shocked at the boy's lot, but to gladly marvel at the power and unsapped grandeur of his spirit.

The desire for lofty spirituality and the persistent search for it is the main, all-determining motif of all the pictures that Tarkovsky made at home.

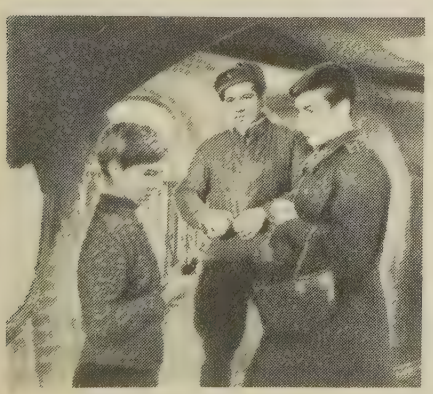
In his creative quest I see above all the expression of his inexhaustible faith in the human being, and the creative power of the human spirit.

That is the basic message of Tarkovsky's films: belief in the human being, and the ardent search for the spiritual energy, the spiritual power that was incarnate in all of Tarkovsky's films from "Ivan's Childhood" to "Stalker."

Death never writes off blunders and weaknesses for anyone. But it always reveals the human being's essence. It helps us to see this essence, purified of everything that had previously been hard to discern from a distance, to discern in the context of those reflections about the historic destinies and humanitarian designation of all of our art, of which Andrei Tarkovsky's films are an integral part.

Evgeny SURKOV

Stills from "Ivan's Childhood" and "Andrei Rublev."



● ASSIGNMENT OVERSEAS

Russian Alphabet and Japanese Characters

The strains of a Russian folk tune are heard and brightly coloured Matryoshka dolls, along with the first three letters of the Russian alphabet, appear on the screen. "Speak Russian," a voice, off, is heard, in Russian, of course. So start the lessons, presented twice a week on the third channel of the Japanese NHK broadcasting corporation, for all who wish to understand Russian and learn something about life in the Soviet Union, a country that is Japan's neighbour.

It was NHK's viewers who first suggested televised classes in Russian. They wrote in to say that they were only too happy to learn the language through the lessons that had been broadcast on radio since the early 1960s but believed television could make the course more exciting. NHK backed the idea, and the U.S.S.R. State Committee for Television and Radio actively responded. Soviet announcers were sent to Japan, help of various kinds was given to select the proper background material, and arrange for filming, and so on.

The Russian proverb to the effect that it is better to see a thing once than to hear about it a hundred times—was borne out completely, as the number who wished to learn Russian on television was most impressive. The first Soviet TV announcer to come to Japan was Anna Shatilova. Then in 1980 an invitation was issued to Soviet television announcer and narrator Vladimir Ukhin, who is very popular with Soviet televiewers, especially younger ones, who see him regularly in the nightly programme "Good night, children."

We went along to see Vladimir Ukhin at home. His guest at the time was a Japanese girl, Mitsuru Eguchi. She observed that at school literature classes she had been wonder-struck by the extraordinary world of Chekhov's and Dostoyevsky's characters. "However," she said, "I decided to major in English literature at the Soka University in Tokyo. I was in my third year, when switching on my TV-set late one night I suddenly heard an unfamiliar language and saw a charming Russian announcer chatting with two lifelike puppets. It was wonderful and ever since I have diligently watched the Russian language programme."

"The Japanese chapter of my life," Vladimir Ukhin took up the tale, "was one of the most exciting and responsible of all. After all, to get to the root of a language is also to understand the people who speak it, along with their culture and history. I very much wanted to get as many Japanese as possible to fall in love with my country. They like Russian songs and Russian writers. So in the Russian-language programme we started a mini-theatre, in which, using mime and gestures, I told not only stories by Chekhov, but also Russian folk tales. These were always accompanied by Russian songs and ballads. In collaboration with R. Anegawa, the programme's compère, and other Japanese announcers, we introduced film shorts of Soviet scenic wonders, and animated cartoons. Though more than 20 people prepared each programme, the most popular characters (with a smile Vladimir Ukhin pointed to a photograph) were these puppets. Recalling successful sketches with puppets on our own TV programmes at home, in Japan I immediately asked for two puppets, Petya and Katya, to be introduced. They were very helpful and enabled me to make Russian easier to grasp."

Vladimir Ukhin once told his Japanese viewers that as a native of Siberia he had lived longer in Siberia than in Moscow. "The Siberians," he said, "are a frank people and always say what they think." His welcoming smile, his sensitivity to the situation and ability to improvise, the skill with which he introduces his listeners to the ins and outs of the Russian language, attracted a record audience, the Japanese newspaper Asahi commented. In numbers of viewers the programme quickly caught up with and overtook English, French and German-language programmes.

In the two years that he worked for NHK—after his first year NHK received scores of letters begging their admired announcer to stay on for another (a society was even set up with the slogan "Invite Ukhin Again")—he travelled the length and breadth of Japan, visiting universities and schools and meeting both factory workers and businessmen.

"In Japan," he says, "I made many friends, and letters to 'Uncle Vladimir' with Japanese characters on the envelope continue to come in. See how many I have."

One old friend is Mitsuru Eguchi. Only recently she went home to start a postgraduate course after several years as an announcer for the Japanese section of Radio Moscow. She has become so fluent in Russian, thanks to her auspicious beginning with the NHK programme, that she is now her teacher's colleague.

Y. GALIN

The monumental work carried out by restorers on this huge Buddhist temple is equal only, perhaps, to that of those who created it. Processing hundreds of thousands of stone slabs is no joke. Each had to be removed, numbered, rubbed clean, polished and coated with a film of herbicidal solution. Detailed information on each slab—its registration number, width, length, thickness, weight, state of disrepair, and location—was fed into computer storage. All the components detached from the structure were computer-indexed.

The temple in question is not Kampuchea's Angkor (of which later) but Boro Budur, a monument of Indonesian architecture on the island of Java. It is to be hoped, however, that Angkor—unquestionably a wonder of the world and the symbol of Kampuchea—will also be restored to its original splendour with international assistance and UNESCO's cooperation.

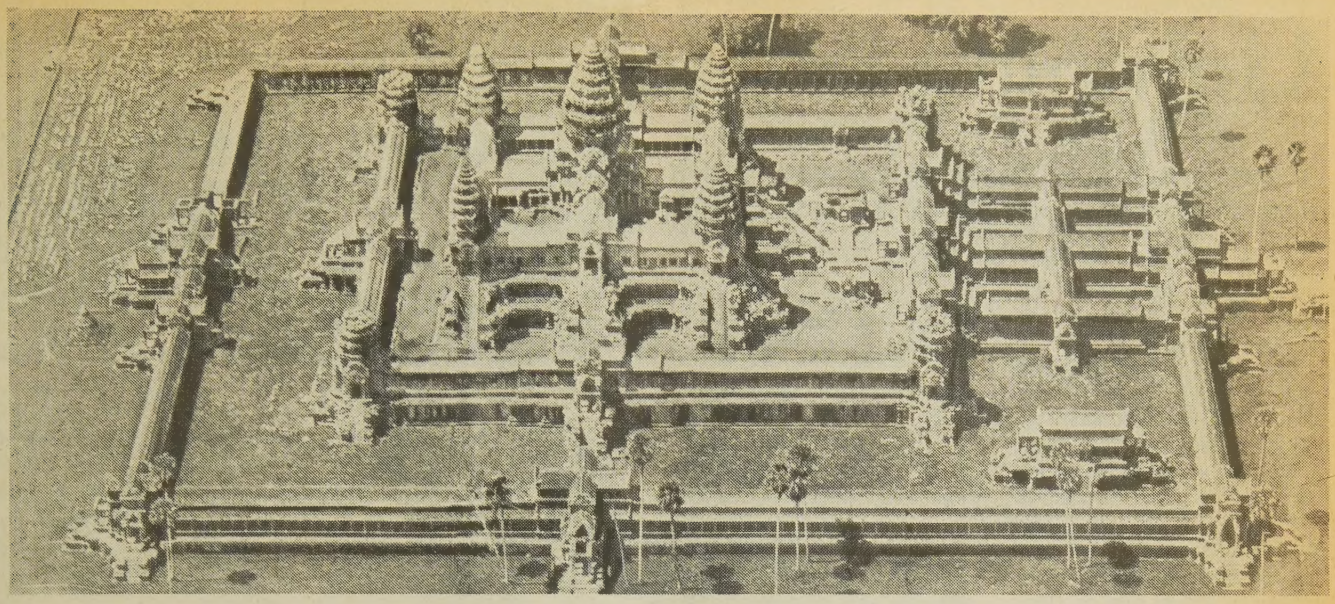
The temples and palaces of this huge complex are an inspired poem in stone composed by ancient Khmer craftsmen—sculptors, masons and carvers whose work is akin to the jeweller's art. Walking along the gallery which girdles Angkor Wat, the largest temple of these, is like leafing through ancient books. Graceful apsaras, mythical dancers, attendants of the gods, are visible all along the way.

Keam Kosal, chief of the international relations department of Siemreap Province people's revolutionary committee, who volunteered to be our guide, explained that nearly 1,700 apsaras are depicted on the gallery walls.

"Just think of all the dramatic events they have witnessed!" he said. "It took 37 years—from 1113 to 1150—to build these temples and palaces in the tropical jungle. Foreign invaders destroyed them much faster than that. Siamese conquerors plundered Angkor Wat's altars and libraries on many occasions. The first raid was in the mid-thirteenth century, and they were repeated over the ages."

As if under a curse, Angkor Wat, once famous and prosperous, has had more than its share of decline and oblivion.

Early this century, Thailand returned Angkor Wat and several Cambodian provinces to the people who built this miracle in stone, and it seemed that Angkor Wat's worst times were over. The French who ruled Indo-China then decided to make Angkor a tourist attraction and started restoration work. In the sixties the well-known French historian and restorer Bernard Groslier



Angkor Wat: From Oblivion to Hope

was commissioned to supervise work on the monuments. At that time the world public awoke to Cambodia and its unique culture, of which Angkor Wat (universally recognized as Angkor's most majestic and beautiful relic) is the pride. More and more foreign tourists trod its flagstone floors.

But Angkor had not left its misfortunes behind it in the Dark Ages. The worst was still to come. On a spring day in 1973, an American B-52 bomber executed a precise target run and opened its bomb hatch right above the temple—a Buddhist sanctuary and part of man's historic heritage. I saw the havoc caused by the attack. Nothing the Siamese invaders had ever done could match it.

Memories of the crime are still fresh in the mind of Peat Krem, the museum curator. A grey-haired man of almost seventy, he bubbles with enviable youthful energy.

"The American act of vandalism can compare only with the outrages committed by Pol Pot's followers, who caused so much destruction to our country and so much suffering to our people," Peat Krem said. "They did not spare Angkor, either. Although the 'Red Khmers' came to power in April 1975, they had damaged the local temples in 1972 when they shelled Angkor Wat with 105-mm guns. "Look," Peat Krem pointed to mutilated frescoes. "These apsaras were shot at by Pol Pot's people.

"And where are hundreds upon hundreds of sculptures of the Buddha?" he went on after a brief pause. "What happened to them under Pol Pot? This used to be the Gallery of a Thousand Buddhas! Now there are only twenty or thirty left. Just think of it: Pol Pot's men had the temple flagstones towed away and used for utilitarian purposes."

I looked at the battered Angkor Wat and thought that now, over a decade since they sowed death and destruction in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, the Americans might try, at least, to make amends to these three countries of Indo-China which have won their right to a life in peace, by helping them in their effort for development. All the more so as under Article 21 of the Paris accords the U.S. was to have contributed to the postwar rehabilitation of Kampuchea, Vietnam and Laos.

But Washington has never lived up to its promises and legal commitments to these countries. The current U.S. Administration is keeping the situation in Southeast Asia tense, compelling the countries of Indo-China to divert their manpower and material resources from peaceful construction to self-defence. It supports the Pol Pot's men exiled from Kampuchea and funds the upkeep of the Khmer reactionaries' military camps.

Under the circumstances, how can one expect the U.S. to give Indo-China assistance in, for instance, restoring its architectural monuments?

But let us return to my conversation with Keam Kosal in Angkor Wat. "We are doing our utmost," he told me, "to restore the palaces and temples of Angkor to their original beauty. But we fall far short of what we need to accomplish this task. So we are counting on international assistance...."

India, the Soviet Union and Poland are already providing this assistance. Our country is a member of the Angkor Aid Association set up on Poland's initiative. We were told at the Union of the Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries that the Friends of Angkor Society had been established in the U.S.S.R. late last December.

Vladimir GODYNA

Angkor—Moscow

From National Geographic (U.S.A.)

Lightning on Ice

Speed-skater Igor Zhelezovsky was named one of the ten best Soviet athletes in 1986

"There are no eternal records or eternal champions, as everyone knows. But as long as you are young and strong, you aspire to the heights. And I will keep on trying to conquer them," says Igor Zhelezovsky, 23, a graduate of the Physical Culture Institute in Minsk. He was chosen sportsman of the year in Soviet Byelorussia, and made the list of the ten best Soviet athletes in the traditional New Year's eve poll of Soviet sports journalists. Moreover, he alone represents winter sports on the list, although there were many successes in last year's world championships, such as biathlonist Valery Medvedtsev and figure-skaters Natalia Bestemyanova and Andrei Bukin, to name a few.

Why Zhelezovsky then? Perhaps because sports writers remember the impression he made last February, when he won his second world title in succession in the sprint event in Karuizawa, Japan.

Victory as such was not the point: there were other victories for other sportsmen. But the drama of competition in the skating rink in Japan, the clash of personalities live on in the memory like a marvellous show, a unique act. Eyewitnesses recounted that before the decisive 1,000-metre race, fun-loving American Dan Jensen (who had to outrun Zhelezovsky by only a tenth of a second to become the overall champion) picked up his guitar, as he always did when he wanted to calm himself. Everyone heard from the Americans that shortly before Dan had been ranked sixth in a competition of professional guitarists in the U.S. On that occasion the accomplished musician failed to strike a simple chord....

It is hard to say whether Zhelezovsky was jittery before the race—he seemed cool. Introvert that he is, he looked distant and self-absorbed. He did not rush after the American, who had shot off from the starting line, but kept gaining on him methodically and inexorably. And eventually he overtook him and was almost a second ahead at the finish.

Whenever I see Zhelezovsky on ice, I have a mixed feeling of admiration and suspense: his style is risky in the extreme. He takes a bend at top speed and you think he will fall at any moment—but thanks to a rare sense of balance he does not.

It was mere curiosity that brought Igor into sport: he always wanted to taste the unknown and when coach Nikolai Gapeyenko started a skating group, the first in Orsha, Igor's home town, he did not hesitate. His schoolmates must have been taken by surprise at his decision: they used to call him "mini-Einstein" for his special love of physics and mathematics. Yet the boy, so keen on brain-twisting problems, chose sport.

Coach and skater still are together, Nikolai Gapeyenko now merited coach and Igor Zhelezovsky merited master of sports of the U.S.S.R. Igor made quick progress: at 15 he was runner-up in the national junior championship and at 18 runner-up in the world junior championship.

While a junior, Igor competed in the combined events but was not good enough for the national squad. Yet Valery Muratov, himself an excellent sprinter in his day, saw something special in the youngster and invited him to join the national sprinters' team under his supervision.

Igor started this season on the right foot: he already won six races and broke the 500-metre world record for the plains, returning 37.24 seconds, in a contest with G.D.R. sprinters in Karl-Marx-Stadt in November. It may be recalled that at the world championship in Japan Igor won both 1,000-metre races but lost in the 500-metre, one to Akira Kuroiva of Japan and the other to Jensen. Now he seems to be gaining speed in the shortest distance as well.

Alexei SREBNITSKY

TASS photo

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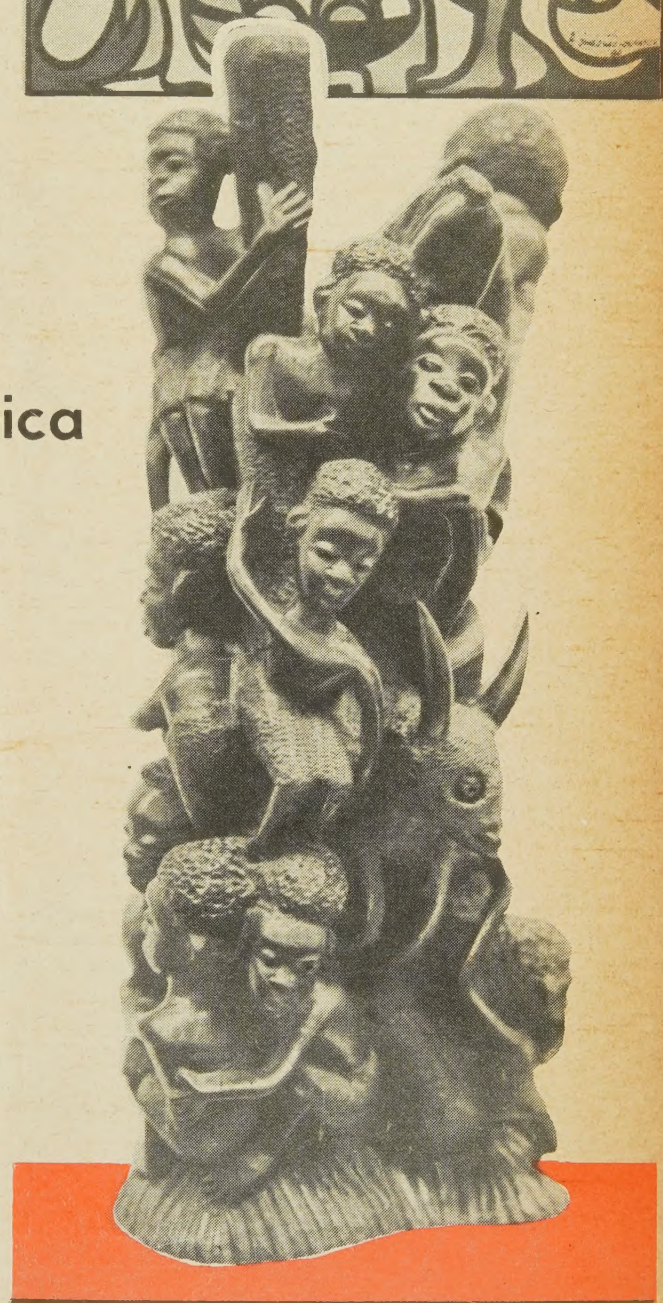

The Art of Africa

They are at once astounding and attractive—the traditional masks and sculptural figures made by masters of African art crafts. In some they evoke admiration, in others bewilderment, with their irregular forms and studied disproportions, grotesque depiction of anger or joy, a combination of the real with the fantastic....

Scholars have often sought an explanation for the popularity of the African art far beyond the boundaries of the Black Continent. The answer might be found in a thought expressed by Leo Tolstoy who said that men communicate their thoughts to others by means of words and their emotions, through the medium of art. Emotions, feelings, moods, and, of course, ideas, are vividly embodied in the sculptural forms perfected over the centuries of the existence of African folk art.

This is brought home vividly to viewers of the exhibition "The Art of Africa" now opened in Moscow. Sponsored by the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, the State Museum of Oriental Art, and the Soviet Association of Friendship with the Peoples of Africa, it consists of about 100 specimens of the traditional, decorative and applied and modern professional art from the collections of the embassies of African countries in Moscow.

- **Appliqué work** (Madagascar).
- **Modern Congolese painting.**
- **Tree of Life** (Tanzania).

Photos by V. Panov

Drying rice.

Thu An (Vietnam)

INTERNATIONAL CONTEST

MAN AND MANKIND

The editors invite all professional and non-professional photographers and artists to enter its 1987 Man and Mankind contest. Your picture stories and sketches (in colour or black-and-white but not less than 13×18 cm. in format), paintings or drawings may cover everyday life, the hopes, concerns, joys and problems of people and must be accompanied by a brief explanatory text, full name and address of entrant.

Please address entries to the editors of New Times, Pushkin Square, 103782, GSP, Moscow, U.S.S.R. Do not forget to mark your envelope "Contest."

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